Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Century

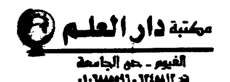
POETRY

Edited and Adapted by

Dr. Ahmad M. Abdel Salam

Reviewed by

Prof. M. M. Enani



Contents



RENAISSANCE IN POETRY

Renaissance in Poetry

Barry Spurr

I

The renaissance (from the French word meaning 'to be born again') refers to the rebirth of art and learning in Europe, in the sixteenth century, under the influence of models from the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome. It is a period of great importance in the development of English literature for it covers the time during which literary production began to acquire distinctive features. It was the triumph of the renaissance and humanism, which first developed in Italy in the 14th century and then spread across Europe. The effect of the Renaissance became evident in England during the reign of Henry VIII and extended into the so-called Elizabethan period which is perhaps the greatest in English literature for its widespread literary activity. Queen Elizabeth was the centre of national life and culture and, therefore, the period took its name from her, though it also refers to the reign of James I, when literary production was only an extension of already developed themes and techniques. Poetry evolved greatly and experiments in new forms were numerous; prose-narrative and literary criticism were also the concern of several distinguished writers who produced original works which

made an important contribution to the establishment of these literary genres. But the greatest achievement of this period was in drama, which developed out of the Miracle and Mystery plays into great dramatic works. The academic education and literary talent of many dramatists enabled them to write plays in which classical and popular elements are masterfully combined. But let us take a detailed look at the various aspects of this extensive literary activity.

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Greek scholars took refuge in Italy carrying with them precious manuscripts of classical culture. This gave way to the intellectual phenomenon which came to be known as 'Renaissance', that is a revival of classical literature and an enthusiastic interest in Greek and Roman life. But it must be said that this movement did not emerge suddenly, but rather had a gradual growth which can be traced to 14th century Italy, when the first stirrings of Humanism began to be felt not as a revival, but rather as a natural development of classical studies. One of the greatest interest humanists was Francis Petrarch (304-13074) who showed a great interest in classical culture which he believed had a more genuine flavour; he was convinced that ancient writers were endowed with more remarkable qualities tan any medieval authors. Petrarch's enthusiasm for ancient

culture was not limited to the study of the classics for his own ends, but he fostered the study of Latin and Greek and searched for ancient manuscripts which opened up the way for the great classical revival of the 15^{th} century. The figure of Petrarch, however, is extremely complex. While on the one hand he may be justly considered a pioneer of the Renaissance, on the other his mental unrest and inner conflict between human and spiritual love embody the crisis in values which seems to belong more to the Middle Ages than to The Renaissance.

The literary effect of the Renaissance began to be felt in England towards the end of the 15^{th} century when scholars, such as Thomas Linacre (c. 1460-1524) and William Grocyn (c. 1446-1519), returning fro Italy where they had studied Greek, introduced the 'New Learning' at Oxford about 1490. Another great scholar was John Colet (c. 1467-1519) who, after studying in Italy, returne3d to England and became Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. In 1504 he founded St Paul's school, the first English secondary school devoted to the 'New Learning'. The name of DESIDERIUS ERASMUS (c. 1466-1536) must be added to the English founders of humanism. He was a Dutch scholar who taught Greek at Cambridge University from 1511 to 1514. Another Greek lecturer at

Cambridge was ROGER ASCHAM (1515-1568) who became Latin secretary to Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth. But the greatest of the English humanists was Sir THOMAS MORE (1478-1535), one of the most outstanding figures in early 16th century England. More devoted himself with equal success to the study of Latin and Greek as well as to Public life. He was a devout Catholic and adhered strongly to his principle. He is best-known in literature for his *Utopia*, a great humanistic work written in Latin in 1515-16 and later translated into English, which presents an imaginary country where social organization is almost perfect.

Most of early Renaissance poetry was written by aristocrats who composed verse for their own pleasure and read their poems to their friends or at Court, which during the early years of Henry VIII's reign had become the centre of the 'New Learning'. The poetical compositions of this period did not come to light through individual publications, but through the initiative of a man, RICHARD TOTTEL (c. 1530-1594), who put together some three hundred poems by various authors and published t hem in 1557 in an anthology called *Tottel's Miscellany*. Most of the poems it contained are historically important because they show the efforts made by their authors to revive poetry in England. The most

outstanding poets who contributed poems to this anthology were SIR THOMAS WYATT (c. 1503-1542) and HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY (c. 1517-1547), who deserve the merit of having introduce3d the Petrarchan sonnet, the most popular verse-form in the Renaissance, into English versification. Although in man cases both Wyatt's and Surrey's sonnets are translations from Petrarch, they show the two authors' efforts to adapt them to the English language and to give a personal touch to the Petrarchan conventional love-themes.

During the reign of Elizabeth, literature flourished in every form. *Tottel's Miscellany* opened up t he way for a host of poets who were influenced in various ways, but also displayed genius and individuality. They were men with an academic education, imbued with the new learning, men who showed a unique power to absorb foreign influences and convert them into valid instruments for their individual works. The most notable examples can be seen in poetry with EDMUND SPENSER (c. 1552-1599), SIR PHILIP SDNEY (1554-1586) and, of course, CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE (1564-1593) and WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616), whose major achievement was in the field of drama. Other poets of the period were SAMUEL DANIEL (1562-1619),

MICHAEL DRAYTON (1563-1631), TOMAS CAMPION (1567-1620) and GEORGE CHAPMAN (1559-1634) best-known for his lyrical translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *odyssey* which inspired Keats's beautiful sonnet *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer.*

Edmund Spenser, the 'Poets' Poet' as he has been defined, was a writer who surpassed all his contemporaries in the variety, complexity and richness of his work. His masterpiece, ***The Faerie Queene*** (1590-1596), is a monumental, though unfinished, allegorical, epic poem written in a new metre ever since called the Spenserian Stanza, telling of human, moral virtues personified by knights. The choice of the epic for the realization of his great poem shows the influence of ancient epics as well as that of Ariosto's ***Orlando Furioso*** (1516) and Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581), though the spirit, the habits of thought and the patriotism with which the poem is suffused are rooted in the English past. Spenser wrote several other works, notable his *Shepheardes Calender* (1579) and his series of love-sonnets, *Amoretti* (1591-95), original in language and poetic style, which place him among the greatest poets of all time.

Philip Sidney was an aristocrat, a man famous for his courtesy and generosity and for his humanistic learning. He

wrote poetry, prose and criticism for his own sake and nothing was published during his lifetime. He is best-known for his delightful love-sonnet, *Astrophel and Stella* (1591), which are among the best of the Elizabethan period for personal emotion and intensity of feeling. Sidney's sonnets form a connected sequence, and in theme and images they are derived from Petrarch, who, as has been said, had set the fashion in Europe and had innumerable imitators. The study of Sidney's works is of basic importance for a better understanding of the English Renaissance.

Renaissance in Poetry II

(Barry Spur)

The rebirth of classical civilization and literature in the Renaissance is most evident in the poetry of the period. There was the imitation of formal modes, such as the elegy, the epithalamion (or marriage- song), the satire, the ode (as derived from the Greek poet Pindar, by such as Dryden) and so on. Many literary conventions were also appropriated; for example, the *carpe diem*- 'seize the day'- address in love poetry from the Roman poet, Horace. Writers displayed both their knowledge and facility in the application of these classical models.

In the sixteenth century, English poetry was principally an amateur's and a courtier's art. The poets of the court, such as Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sir Philip Sidney, wrote poetry in the midst of their other activities in statecraft, diplomacy and warfare. It was one of several amateur skills, like horsemanship and musicianship, which presented the model of behaviour for Renaissance courtiers. There was no conception of the professional poet.

Yet, in this era of change we can discern in the literary activities of Sidney, especially, the emergence of the 'man of letters'. For he was not only a prolific poet, but the author of

the most important work of prose-fiction of the Elizabethan age, the *Arcadia,* and of its only significant essay in literary criticism, *The Defence of Poesy.*

Poems in this period were more often circulated in manuscript than published. Many were written to be sung to the accompaniment of the lute, such as Wyatt's 'My Lute, Awake!'

> My lute, awake! Perform the last
> Labour that thou and I shall waste,
> And end that I have now begun;
> For when this song in sung and past,
> My lute, be still, for I have done.....

Very few of Wyatt's poems were published in his lifetime (he died in 1542). However, in the second half of the sixteenth century, as the transition began slowly to take place from the amateur to the professional role of the poet, several collections of poems appeared – most notably, in 1577, a miscellany by several writers (including Wyatt) collected by the printer, Richard Tottel.

As well as Wyatt's pomes the miscellany included forty to Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. These two poets were

responsible, through this collection, for introducing the sonnet into English. They imitated the principal Italian sonneteer, Francesco Petrarch (1304-74), who, in his classical literary scholarship, was a precursor of the European Renaissance. The influence of Petrarch on English poetry remained powerful for a century, and is a sign of the pre-eminence of Italy as the source of Renaissance culture. The Italian journey (undertaken by Milton, for example) nurtured the appreciation of the flowering of artistry and learning in such centres as Florence. This co-existed with a view particularly in English minds, of Italy as debauched and decadent. Ben Jonson's dramatic study of corruption, *Volpone*, is set in Venice.

The Italian sonnet provided the model for the formal, fourteen- line structure of the sonnet, with the division into octave (the first eight lines) and sestet (the remaining six). Its subject matter and various attitudes and references also came from the Italian sonnet: the address to the idealized woman (Laura, in Petrarch's case; Stella, in Sidney's) and the presentation of the extreme qualities of the speaker's passion. This passion was restrained by the formalities of the sonnet's strict literary arrangement and, eventually, the predictability of those very attitudes.

Petrarch's authority was not absolute, however. His Italian form of the sonnet was succeeded – in the sonnets of Shakespeare, for example- by the so- called English form, which varied the octave / sestet structure with three quatrains (groups of four lines) and a concluding couplet, and which could satirically overturn the idealization of the typical Petrarchan speaker, most famously in Shakespeare's my mistress eyes are nothing like the sun. A generation later, in Milton's sonnet-writing career, we find both Petrarchan and other forms being used, including that of another Italian sonneteer, Giovanni Della case, who rejected Petrarch's metrical regularity.

While Wyatt and Surrey were both indebted to Petrarch, their versions of the Petrarchan models differed in character, as in these imitations of the same sonnet, Amor che nel penser mio vive e regne:

> The long love that in my thought doth harbour
> And in mine heart doth keep his residence.
> Into my face presseth with bold pretence.
> And therein campeth, spreading his banner.
> She that me learneth to love and suffer.
> And will that my trust and lust's negligence
> Be reined by reason, shame and reverence,

With his hardiness taketh displeasure
Wherewithal unto the heart's forest he fleeth,
Leaving his enterprise with pain an cry.
And there him hideth, and not appeareth.
What may I do, when my master feareth,
But in the field with him to live and die?
For good is the life ending faithfully
Love, that doth reign and live within my thought,
And built his seat within my captive breast,
Clad in the arms wherein with me he fought,
Oft in my face he doth his banner rest.
But she that taught me love and suffer pain,
My doubtful hope and eke10 my hot desire
With shamefast look to shadow and refrain,
Her coward Love, then, to the heart apace.
Taketh his flight where he doth lurk and plain
His purpose lost, and dare not show his face.
For my lord's guilt thus faultless bide I pain,
Yet from my lord shall not my foot remove
Sweet is the death that taketh end by love.

SURREY

The contrasts between these poems show both the fertility of the Italian model from which they derived and the different

qualities of English poetry which they represent. Rhythmically, Surrey's is much more regular, to the point of a sing- song metre. We also note, at the very beginning, his stricter fidelity to the Petrarchan original: Amor, is Petrarch's opening, 'Love', Surrey's. Wyatt, more interestingly, gives us the long love with its alliteration and the sense (aurally) in that long, heavy phrase, of *longueur-*. protracted, even tedious presence. Wyatt's control of rhythm is less even, for which he was often criticized, but it is arguably more appropriate here to the subject of Cupid's unpredictable behaviour.

More striking, however, is the inventiveness of Wyatt's conception with regard to Surrey's the vitality of his rendering of Petrarch's imagery. If we compare the first quatrain of each sonnet, we note the striking quality of Wyatt's verbs: 'harbour', 'presseth', 'spreading'. In contrast, Surrey is less dramatic: 'reign and live', 'built', 'clad', 'rest'. At the beginning of the sestet, Wyatt has cupid, in a verb, fleeing into the forest; Surrey refers, in a noun, to the act of light, Wyatt's dramatic immediacy and lack of rhythmic polish present of rough- hewn quality, invigorating the material, and (whether stylized or not) they are indicative of the developing independence of the English voice in poetry. Within a generation, Donne's co- called . songs and sonnets (which are

rarely lyrical and never, strictly speaking, sonnets) are stridently assertive, rudely rebuking all Petrarchans..

It is in Sir Philip Sidney's sequence of 108 sonnets and 11 songs, *Astrophil and Stella,* that we encounter the most sustained and brilliant appropriation of the Petrarchan subject and style in the Renaissance. In his literary- critical essay, *The Defence of Poesy,* Sidney argues that poetry should both teach and delight; through delighting, it should move men to take goodness in hand, by presenting notable images of virtues, vices, or what else. The theory had its source in Horace's Art of Poetry. In *Astrophil and Stella,* accordingly, virtuous counsel is provided about persistence in love and the idealization of the beloved in the unfolding drama of the pair's relationship.

The sequence is not rigorously sequential: it ends inclusively although it begins predictably and conventionally with a determination to speak from the heart. This is one of the witty poses of writers in the Petrarchan tradition, and in the fifteenth sonnet Sidney's speaker even affects to reject Petrarchan artificiality in the course of his indebtedness to him:

You that do search for every purling spring
Which from the ribs of old Parnassus flows.

And every flower, not sweet perhaps, which grows
Near thereabout, into your poesy wring;
You that do dictionary's method bring
Into your rhymes, running in rattling rows:
You that poor Petrarch's long- deceased woes.
With new- born sighs and denizened wit do sing'
You take wrong ways, those far- fet helps be such,
As do bewray a want of inward touch,
And sure at length stolen goods do come to light
But if (both for your love and skill) your name
You seek to nurse at fullest breasts of Fame,
Stella behold, and then begin to endite.

The sonnet embraces learning in the context of its rejection; the consummation of the strategy is the concluding conventional determination to be natural and spontaneous. What brigs the sonnet to life is not its subject matter but its style. The repeated use of you has an accumulating, accusatory character; the extremity of verbs, such as wring (comically satirizing the slavish imitators of classical poetry and rhetoric); the alliterated mimickry and mockery of the metrical rhymesters: your rhymes, running in rattling rows; the onomatopoeia of sighs, and the physical immediacy of the

concluding feminine imagery (appropriate in a sequence of addresses to Stella) of being nursed at Fame's breasts. This is a poetry as securely within its tradition as it is happily chafing against it. It is the expression of the tension between the indebtedness of English literary culture to the Italian and classical models and its determination to speak with its own voice.

We hear this impulse again in sonnet 74, with its speaker's affectation of amateurism in literary learning set within the context of its deft display. There is the subtext, too, of English suspicion about continental ways with a celebration of him – grown virtue:

I never drank of Aganippe well.
Nor ever did in shade of tempe sit
And muses scron with vulgar brains to dwell
Poor layman I, for sacrd rites unfit.
Some do I hear of poets fury tell,
But God wot , wot not what they mean by it;
And this I swear by blackest brook of heel,
I am no pick- purse of another's wit.
How falls it then that with so smooth an ease
My thoughts I speak, and what I speak doth flow
In verse, and that my verse best wits doth please?

Guess we the cause. What is it thus, Fie no.

Or so? Much less. How then? Sure thus it is:

My lips are sweet, inspired with stella's kiss.

The construction of the speaker as a layman is directly related to the cherished amateurism of Renaissance poetic composition. Sir Philip Sidney was regarded as the quintessential Renaissance man- as much because of the noble circumstance of his death as of the accomplishments of his life, The Englishness of his blustering- But God wot, wot not what they mean by it..... is amusingly and dramatically aural. It contrasts sharply with the preciosity of the ambience of Aganippe and Tempe which are decisively rejected at the beginning, Yet in spite of his native vulgarity.... Expressed in the highly artificial form of the sonnet which Sidney sustains effortlessly his poetry flows. He says it in this smooth gradation, assisted by enjambment:

> My thoughts I speak and what I speak doth flow
> In verse, and that my verse best wits doth please.

The bluster returns in the sharp dialogue, only to be resolved again... and finally- in the sweetness of reference and sound in the concluding onomatopoeia.

There are many more poems in the sequence that are thoroughly Petrarchan in attitude and imagery, in spite of Sidney's ambivalence towards the tradition. However, Sidney imbues them with their own distinctive artistry and immediacy, as in this outpouring of exultation which , in its sounds is as celebratory as its sense:

O joy, too high for my low style to show,
O bliss, fit for a nobler state then me!
Envy, put out thine eyes, lest thou do see
What oceans of delight in me do flow
My friend, that oft saw through all masks my woe.
Come, come, and let me pour myself on thee:
Gone is the winter of my misery;
My spring appears; o see what here doth grow.
For stella hath , with words where faith doth shine.
Of her high heart given me the monarchy;
I, I, O I may say, that she is mine.
And though she give but this conditionly
This realm of bliss, while virtuous course I take.
No kings be crowned but they some covenants make.

The keynote of exultation is sounded in the opening combination of the ejaculation "O" and the direct and delightful expression of happiness: "Joy". Sidney also

introduces variations of "I" sounds- as in high – which, with the initial outpouring of emotion, have their later consummation in the splendid exultation: I,I,O I may say… as he announces that she is mine this is poetry that enacts the mood of its speaker, it does not merely describe it. In addition to this inventiveness, however , Sidney includes conventional Petrarchan references to the macrocosmic dimensions of the speaker's microcosmic passion:

Oceans of delight in me do flow

The references to the winter of my misery and the arrival of spring when Stella acquiesces to him are also conventional. The speaker in the sonnet's final conceit (in the sense both of metaphor and of over- reaching in the mood of exultation) compares himself to a king. He has been enthroned in the monarchy of love, the realm of bliss, but, surprisingly, in the last stroke of brilliance in the poem. There is a qualification at the end. Like a king, he must enter into an undertaking when he receives the crown- to be a faithful servant and pursue a virtuous. In other words, he must be true to Stella. The poem is a wonderful expression of delight, but, in true Sidneian fashion, it possesses the restraint of a certain didacticism.

The element of delightful teaching, and of morality and spirituality pleasantly mediated, was an important component of Renaissance poetry in general and of the sonnet sequence in particular. While it may seem incongruous, in terms of the decorum of a collection of love poems, Edmund Spenser, in his *Amoretti,* proceeds form a sonnet in which he uses the conventional imagery of the hunt as a metaphor for the pursuit of the 'gentle deare', 'lyke as a huntsman after weary chace', to this celebration of Easter Day in which 'deare' is repeated three times in a very different context:

> Most glorious lord of lyfe, that on this day.
> Didst make thy triumph over death and sin;
> And having harrowed heel, didst bring away
> Captivity thence captive us to win:
> This joyous day deare lord, with joy begin,
> And grant that we for whom thou diddest dye.
> Being with thy deare blood clene washt from sin.
> May live for ever in felicity.
> And that thy love we weighing worthily
> May likewise love thee for the same againe:
> And for thy sake that all lyke deare didst buy.
> With love may one another entertayne.
> So let us love, deare love, lyke as we ought,

Love is the lesson which the lord us taught.

This is not merely a reminder of the unrigorously sequential nature of the sonnet sequence, or the possibility of connecting earthly and heavenly loves, or of the Renaissance delight in variety of reference... copia (or copiousness). Most significantly, it reminds us that in the Renaissance, unlike modern post- Christian civilization, religious concerns were an integral part of life. The sensual and the spiritual were constantly interacting, and did so in Metaphysical poetry violently.

For this reason, the most important text for the student of English Renaissance poetry is the Holy Bible, for everyone at the time, learned and unlearned alike, was familiar with it. It had a mixture of literary modes, of prose and poetry: the first complete Bible in English was by Miles coverdale, published in 1535 . The Great bible appeared in 1540; it was the first English translation to be officially sanctioned. The Geneva Bible followed twenty ears later, and the Bisops Bible in 1568. King James's authorization of the version of 1611 produced the translation which was not only a monument of scholarship, but a masterpiece of language which remains today the single most important source in the study of English literary texts.

The poeticizing of the already poetic psalms and other sections of the Bible was a favourite literary and pious exercise in the Renaissance. Poets such as Sidney and Donne undertook this, and even a libertine poet like Thomas Carew (pronounced 'Carey')translated nine of them .Donne indeed ,said of the translation of the psalms by Sidney and his sister ,Mary Herbert ,countess of Pembroke ,that' they tell us why ,and teach us haw to sing '.

There is no better way to enter the mind of the renaissance and the seventeenth century ,in England ,than to read the authorised (or king James) version of 1611.Milton for example ,knew it by heart and its presence is pervasive in his poetry .Bunyan's style is modeled on its prose .while there can be no substitute for reading it in its entirety, the recently published compilation, ***king Jame's Bible:*** **A selection**, edited by W.H. Stvenson (Longman: London, 1994) is an excellent introduction.

Further to the king James Bible, students of Poetry in English should also acquaint themselves with the works of the great classical writers, such as Homer and Virgil , which are accessible to the non- classicist in very readable translations and which were similarly well- known to Renaissance Poets.

Sample Question

1. What characteristics of theme and style would you identify for comment in this sonnet, early in Sidney's sequence, *Astrophil and Stella?*

It is most true that eyes are formed to serve
The inward light, and that the heavenly part
Ought to be king, from whose rules who do swerve,
Rebels to nature, strive for their own smart.
It is most true, what we call Cupid's dart.
An image is, which for ourselves we carve;
And, fools, adore in temple of our heart,
Till that good god make church and churchman starve.
True , that true beauty virtue is indeed.
Wherefo this beauty can be but a shade.
Which elements with mortal mixture breed;
True, that on earth we are but pilgrims made,
And should in soul up to our country mover;
True, and yet true that I must Stella love.

2. In this sonnet from his *Amoretti,* Spenser uses a conventional Renaissance conceit. But his poetic style gives it new and unique vitality, Do you agree?

Of this worlds theatre in which we stay,
My love like the spectator ydly sits
Beholding me that all the pageants play.
Disguysing diversly my troubled wits.
Sometimes I joy when glad occasion fits,
And ask in myrth lyke to a comedy:
Soone after when my joy to sorrow flits.
I waile and make my woes a tragedy.
Yet she, beholding me with constant eye.
Delights not in my mirth nor rues my smart:
But when I laugh she mocks, and when I cry.
She laughs and hardens evermore her heart.
What then can move her? If nor mirth nor
mone,
She is no women, but a senseless stone.

William Shakespeare

(1564- 1616)

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford- on- Avon in 1564, the son of a prominent citizen. He presumably attended the Stratford grammar school, but we know nothing certain about his young life, apart from his christening and then his marriage, eighteen years later, to Anne Hathaway. In 1583, they had a daughter and, in 1585 twins, a boy and a girl.

There is no more information until 1592, when Shakespeare is already well- known in London both as an actor and a playwright. He belonged to the acting company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, Later (under James I) the king's Men. In 1599 this group built and became resident at the Globe, the leading Elizabethan theatre.

Shakespeare's writing, in his early years, included poetry as well as plays, *Venus and Adonis* was published in 1593 and *The Rape of Lucrece* in 1594. His contemporary, Francis Meres, records in 1598 the Shakespeare has circulated his sugared sonnets among his private friends. But these were not published until 1609. Shakespeare's play, moreover, contain a variety of songs, revealing his lyrical mastery.

In 1610, Shakespeare returned to Stratford, although he continued his dramatic writing. He died there in 1616. It was not until 1623, in the First Folio, that his plays were published in a collected edition.

THE SONNETS:

The sonnet sequence, such as Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella,* was a popular literary form in the Renaissance. Shakespeare's sonnets, published by Thomas Thorp, bear a dedication to "Mr. W.H.". There has been considerable speculation over the centuries as to the identity of the dedicatee, assuming that he must be the subject of at least some of the sonnets. A modern historian of the Elizabethan age, A.L. Rowse, argues that "Mr.W.H." was Sir William Harvery, who had married the mother of Shakespeare's patron, Southampton (the young lord of the poems), and who was therefore in a position of close proximity to Southampton and able to get the manuscript for publication by Thorp. The dedication, in other words, is Thorp's, not Shakespeare's. That it was regular social usage of the time for knights to be referred to as Mr explains why Sir William is called Mr. W.H.

The young man of the sonnets, on the other hand (Rowse continues) is Southampton. But he does not accept that the early poems about him reveal a homosexual passion, as has often been proposed. Rather,

It was proper for an Elizabethan poet to address his Patron or his love in courtly, flo⸱ ery language.

Moreover, there's an unmistakable tutorial tone.

In the matter of a later group of sonnets which deal with a love- triangle, involving two men and a women, Rowse argues that the other man is Christopher Marlowe, Shakespeare' rival for the patronage of Southampton during difficult years for playwrights, in 1592- 93, when the theatres were closed because of the plague. At this stage Shakespeare's great work lay ahead and Marlowe was the superior dramatist. Then... suddenly...... the rival and the rivalry disappear from the poetry. This reflects, Rowse argues, Marlowe's untimely death in a tavern brawl in 1593.

Finally Rowse offers a highly controversial solution to the mystery of the Dark Lady of several of the poems . He argues that she was Aemilia Lanier, the daughter of one of Queen lizabeth's Italian musicians who married another musician. Alphonso Lanier, after becoming pregnant to the

Lord Chamberlain she resented her fall from grace, Rowse contends and Shakespeare was captivated by her complex, high- spirited Italianate character. In time, she underwent a conversion to Christianity and published a long religious poem in 1610 to correct (Rowse argues) the defaming portrait of her in Shakespeare's sonnets, which had been published the year before.

While Rowse's arguments are not necessarily final, they are thought provoking solutions to several puzzles about the sonnets. They are also of particular assistance if we read the sequence as a whole, when questions about the story- line and its possible factual bases inevitably arise. At this stage, however, it is the individual poems that are of interest to us. We should examine the poetic qualities of the sonnets which reveal (as Shakespeare's plays do also) the fertility of thematic interest and the stylistic inventiveness of his genius.

SELECTED SONNETS:

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do sake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all to short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometimes declines
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grows'st:
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

This is a sonnet of sustained praise of the beloved. Although there appears to be a disjunction at the beginning of the sestet- 'But thy eternal summer shall not fade'- the compliment is a continuation of the praise in the opening lines and has the same seasonal reference. The difference now is that the lover who is better than summer is now super; actively

so, for she is not subject to the finiteness of a season, but an expression of the eternal.

The opening line of the poem is a proposition, in the manner of an intellectual exercise; thought and emotion are typically mixed in Renaissance poetry. But in the query there is already uncertainty about the validity of the comparison, which the second line emphasizes with its two good reasons for this doubt by the repetition of "more". The subject of the poem is more lovely than summer and more temperate. The speaker, in this way, is showing that while he is interested in love, he is also preoccupied with time and its passing, as in the next line with its forceful impact in the first word:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May

There is onomatopoeia here in both winds and shake as, even at its beginning summer reveals its transitory lease. The cherished buds symbolize its promise, but that can be.... Like the buds .... Short-lived. Shakespeare is thinking of course, of an English summer which is always a dubious season. It can be scorching, or fitful, or even non- existent:

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines
And often is his gold complexion dimmed

The speaker is referring both to the experience of a particular summer and of a succession of summers. In so doing, he is not only considering love by comparison, or time and its passing. He is reflecting most importantly on change and decay... mutability, as the Renaissance poets called it as revealed by nature embodiment of their contradiction in an alternative sequence of negatives:

> Thy eternal summer shall *not* fade.
> *Nor* lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
> *Nor* shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade.

We can hear Death in that characterization of his speech, even as Shakespeare is silencing him.

Apparently arrogantly, at the end, the guarantee of the beloved's eternal persistence as a beautiful being is the poet's celebration in this sonnet: this gives life to thee. But it was conventional for the Renaissance poet to claim immortality for hi lines. Shakespeare has arranged his appropriation of the convention so that the immortality ascribed to the lover is not diminished by this assertion, because it has already been established. Eternal beauty takes life from his lines, but they, in turn, have taken their life from the beloved.

The beauty of a day in summer is variable and short-lived. The beauty of Shakespeare's friend, however, is lovelier than this beauty. Shakespeare would immortalize his friend's beauty by means of the sonnets which he has written. Shakespeare's emotion in this sonnet is one of joy in his friend's beauty and also one of pride in his own achievement in having written these sonnets.

In the first eight lines the poet asks whether he should compare his friend's beauty to a day in summer. He declares that his friend is more lovely and stable in his beauty. Rough winds cause much damage to the sweet buds of the summer month of May, and the duration of the season of summer is too short. Besides, in summer the sun sometimes becomes too bright and hot, and often is the brightness of summer diminished (by fog or cloud). The fact is that every beautiful thing loses its beauty at some time or the other. Every beautiful thing is robbed of its beauty by chance or by the changing course of Nature. However, your beauty is everlasting, and it would never fade away. Nor would you ever lose possession of the beauty which you now have. Nor even death be able to claim that it has snatched your beauty away and has made

you wander in the darkness of its regions. Death would not be able to make any such claim because your beauty would increase rather than fade through these sonnets which I am writing as a tribute to. As long as men live in this world, and as long as men have eyes which can see, so long would these sonnets continue to be read, and these sonnets would impart to you an immortal life.

Shakespeare has here glorified or idealized the beauty of his friend. This sonnet is, therefore, his tribute or homage to his friend. The emotion in this sonnet is not mild or luke warm. The emotion here is intense. In fact, the sonnet seems to throb with emotion. Nor can we doubt the author's sincerity. Spontaneity is another characteristic of this sonnet which seems to have flowed from Shakespeare's pen as naturally as water flows from a spring.

Shakespeare divided the sonnet into three quatrains and a heroic couplet: ab ab cd cd ef ef gg. The first two quatrains contains one aspect of the central idea. The third quatrains contains another. He gives a tentative answer to his question in the second line. It is hot, sometimes clouds. It is not calm and it is short. The beauty is revealed is short live.

Shakespeare uses the repetition of words to develop

internal music, reinforce the meaning and link related words.

Shakespeare's sonnets abound in figures of speech; and here we have several metaphors.

The eye of heaven – the sun. (This is a metaphor. The sun shining in the sky has been called "the eye of heaven").

The eternal summer. This is another metaphor. The friend's beauty has been called his "eternal summer". Summer in England is a lovely season. Shakespeare has metaphorically used the word "summer" for his friend's beauty; and he has described it as "eternal summer" because the friend's beauty would never die.

Sonnet 34

Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day,
And make me travel forth without my cloak,
To let base clouds o'vertake me in my way,
Hiding thy bravery in their rotten smoke?

'Tis not enough that through the cloud thou break,
To dry the rain on my storm-beaten face,
For no man well of such a slave can speak,
That heals the wound, and cures not the disgrace.

Nor can they shame give physic to my grief;
Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss.
The' offender's sorrow lends but weak relief
To him that bears the strong offence's cross.

Ah but those tears are pearl which thy love sheds,
And they are rich, and ransom all ill deeds.

This is a sonnet of reproach. The poet is addressing someone who has committed sdaa mean act, and then repented: but the repentance was not enough to compensate for the meanness, and so he continues to feel betrayed, and to tell

his friend that he seems less attractive than he was. Thus much is clear, but, as far as the facts go, not much more Who is the friend and what has he done? Narrative always arouses curiosity, and the shadow of narrative that lies behind this poem can easily make us curious, but the poem does not answer these questions. Perhaps it was intended for readers who already knew that the poem was clear without them, for he was concerned to express his disappointment and bitterness, not to recapitulate what had given rise to it. The result is a poem that any of us could apply to a situation in which we feel betrayed: for poetry, after all, takes the particular and universalizes it.

This is also a sonnet: that is, a poem of fourteen lines written according to a set of fairly rigid rules, governing its rhyme-scheme. The rules for this kind of sonnet demand four quatrains, rhyming alternatively, and a final couplet- or, to represent the rhyme-scheme by letters, *abab cdcd efef gg*. The poet has stuck to the rules, and a moment's reflection shows us that they are not merely rules for rhyming. The whole movement of the poem is adjusted to this pattern: it makes three measured, bitter statements, each in four lines, and then a final concluding remark in a different tone. The first quatrain is the initial rebuke: why did you begin so well and then

behave so meanly? The second quatrain admits that the trouble is now over, and that the friend is once more smiling on him, but asserts that this is not enough to undo the damage. The third quatrain admits further that the friend has repented and shown shame, but this too is not enough: "I have still the loss." Apologies do not really atone, in the eyes of the offended party. Only in the last couplet is there anything that looks like a real concession by the poet, a final brief but ringing admission that when such a friend repents we have to yield, for "those tears are pearl".

My Mistress' Eyes Are Nothing Like The Sun

My Mistress' Eyes Are Nothing Like The Sun,
Coral is far more red, than her lips red
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun:
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head:
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks,
And in some perfumes is there more delight,
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know,
That music hath a far more pleasing sound:
I grant I never saw a goddess go,
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.
And yet by heaven I think my love as rare,
An any she belied with false compare.

Shakespeare finds his mistress wanting in all those attractions which are associated with beauty; and yet he thinks her to be the most beautiful woman in the world.

Here is an unconventional kind of sonnet. Shakespeare, like every lover in t his world, believes his mistress to be a most beautiful woman; and yet he is also aware of the fact that his judgment of her is contrary to what people think about her.

Certain ideas of beauty are well established. A fair complexion, a redness of the lips, a luster in the eyes, a natural mingling of red and white in the cheeks, a sweet voice, and a sweet breath are among the essential requirements of beauty in a woman. Shakespeare's mistress is lacking in these requirements; and yet in Shakespeare's eyes his mistress is an exceptionally beautiful woman. Now, it is possible that Shakespeare means literally what he has said in this sonnet; but it is also possible that Shakespeare may be ridiculing his mistress after she had proved unfaithful to him. Thus this sonnet may contain genuine praise by Shakespeare of his mistress in the days when she was really in love with him or it may be a satire on that woman when she had proved disloyal to him by transferring her affections from him to his friend, The Earl of Southampton.

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes.

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes.
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless.. cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope.
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed.
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope.
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising.
Haply I think on thee, and then my state.
(Like to the lark at break of day arising.
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate;
    For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings
    That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

This is one of Shakespeare's most famous sonnets; and it certainly deserves a high rank. The theme of this poem is Shakespeare's celebration of his friendship with the Earl of Southampton. But it may also serve as a celebration of true friendship in general. Each one of us has his moments of depression caused by the feeling of frustration in life. Each

one of us, comparing himself with others, finds that he has not been able to achieve what others have got. At such times, one can certainly derive a lot of pleasure from the fact that he has got a true friend. Friendship is, indeed, something very precious; but it is a treasure which only a few can claim to have acquired.

The focus of this sonnet is the speaker and his condition. It is an aggrieved reflection on his public, professional life and its problems. It is very different from a Petrarchan sonnet because it does not concentrate on the beloved or on love. Although at the end, of course, there is the exultant praise of both as liberating the speaker from his worldly cares.

The speaker's response to his divorce from favour is to lament it, in words- a lone beweep.... That reflect the sounds of moaning and crying Notice again the concentration on the eyes: weeping was a sign of genuine grief. There were even prayers for the grace of tears to indicate a genuinely penitent soul.

More boisterously now, he pleads to heaven; but his pleas are futile. This agitation is captured stylistically in the forthright consonants and alliteration (on "b") in the third line, which is perpetuated in the strong verb, "curse", in the next. Having introduced Fortune at the beginning, the speaker now

refers to my fate, emphasizing (as Shakespeare often does in his plays) how he is subject to these capricious influences.

In such a situation, one envies others. And the speaker utters a heated catalogue of fortunate ones.... The man with prospects, good looks, influential friends, talent and breadth of accomplishment. He would be a Renaissance man, a successful courtier. Emerging here is the familiar them of the desire to rise in such circumstances, but it is held in a tension (particularly by outsiders like Shakespeare and Donne) with criticisms of the world of the court.

The speaker all but despairs..... even his dearest pleasures have lost their appeal. But one consolation remains and it annihilates all his suffering and misfortune: it is the beloved. In contemplation of his love, the speaker undergoes a metamorphosis. His state... his psychological and emotional condition... is transformed. Shakespeare is toying here with the political idea also of his speaker's position in society which is different from that of kings (as he says at the end), but not inferior, because he knows superlative happiness in love. It is too much to say that this is subversive of the court or the monarchy, but it certainly challenges absolute conceptions about kingship ... and we note the strong verb, I scorn. Further, we see that he speaks of kings in the plural which

paradoxically minimizes kingship: they are less remarkable for being numerous.

Most striking and memorable, however, is the splendid simile in the sestet , for his joyous soul:

My state

(Like to the lark at break of day arising

From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate.

Such poetry defies paraphrase in its perfection. But we might note the sounds of the words which contribute to this image. (aural and visual) of sublime happiness. The language sings.... In the "k" alliteration, for example ... as it enacts the birdsong it describes . And the enjambment... arising/ from sullen earth.... Describes the soaring impulse of that ecstasy.

The language used in this sonnet is a very striking example of Shakespeare's capacity to choose the most appropriate words and to put then into excellent combinations. This kind of manipulation of the language and this skill in combining words into phrases and clauses constitute what is known as the felicity of style. The development of the idea in this sonnet is most logical, and the conclusion reached at the end comes a s an appropriate climax. In the first half of the sonnet, Shakespeare speaks of his sense of disappointment in life, while in the second half he speaks of the rich

compensation that he has got. It is, indeed, an exquisite sonnet both by virtue of its theme and its style.

But you shall shine more bright in these contents

But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor mars is sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.
Gainst death and all – oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom
So, till the judgment that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers "eyes.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments , love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds.
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O , no, it is an ever- fixed mark.
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand ring bark.
Whose worth's unknown, although his highth be taken
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved.
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Not Mine Own Fears, Nor The Prophetic Soul

Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
Of the wide world, dreaming on things to come,
Can yet the lease of my true love control,
Supposed as forfeit to a confined doom.
The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured,
And the sad augurs mocks their own presage,
Incertainties now crown themselves assured,
And peace proclaims olives of endless age.
Now with the drops of this most balmy time,
My love looks fresh, and death to me subscribes.
Since spite of him I'll live in this poor rhyme,
While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes.
And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.

Questions:

1- Shakespeare's sonnets are not confined to matters of idealized love. They also provide telling reflections on life, in all its variety. Do you agree? Use the following poem as a staring- point for your discussion of two or three sonnets.

Th' xpense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action; and till action, lust
I perjured, murd rous, bloody, full of blame,
Savage , extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust;
Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight:
Past reason hunted; and no sooner had,
Past reason hated, as a swallowed bait,
On purpose laid to make the taker mad:
Mad in pursuit, and in possession so;
Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;
A bliss in proof .... And proved, a very woe;
Before, a joy proposed ; behind , a dream.
All this the world well knows; yet none knows well
To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

2- Shakespeare's manner, as a poet, is as important as his matter in communicating his ideas forcefully and memorably. Do you agree? Refer in detail to two or three sonnets.

Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586)

Sir Philip Sidney was born on November 30, 1554, at Penshurst, Kent. He was the eldest son of Sir Henry Sidney, Lord Deputy of Ireland, and nephew of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. He was named after his godfather, Philip II of Spain. After private tutelage, he entered Shrewsbury School at the age of ten in 1564, on the same day as Fulke Greville, who became his fast friend and, later, his biographer. After attending Christ Church, Oxford, (1568-1571) he left without taking a degree in order to complete his education by travelling the continent. Among the places he visited were Paris, Frankfurt, Venice, and Vienna.

Sidney returned to England in 1575, living the life of a popular and eminent courtier. In 1577, he was sent as ambassador to the German Emperor and the Prince of Orange. Officially, he had been sent to condole the princes on the deaths of their fathers. His real mission was to feel out the chances for the creation of a Protestant league. Yet, the budding diplomatic career was cut short because the Queen found Sidney to be perhaps too ardent in his Protestantism, the Queen preferring a more cautious approach. Upon his return, Sidney attended the court of Elizabeth I and actively encouraged such authors as Edward Dyer, Greville, and most

importantly, the young Edmund Spenser, who dedicated The Shepheardes Calender to him.

In 1580, he incurred the queen's displeasure by opposing her projected marriage to the Duke of Anjou, Roman Catholic heir to the French throne, and was dismissed from court for a time. He left the court for the estate of his cherished sister Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke. During his stay, he wrote the long pastoral romance Arcadia. At some uncertain date, he composed a major piece of critical prose that was published after his death under two titles, *The Defence of Poesy* and *An Apology for Poetry*. Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* ("Star-lover and Star") was begun probably around 1576, during Sidney's courtship with Penelope Devereux. Astrophil and Stella, which includes 108 sonnets and 11 songs, is the first in the long line of Elizabethan sonnet cycles. Most of the sonnets are influenced by Petrarchan conventions.

Yet Sidney was growing restless with lack of appointments. In 1585 he made a covert attempt to join Drake's expedition to Cadiz. Elizabeth summoned Sidney to court, and appointed him governor of Flushing in the Netherlands. In 1586 Sidney, along with his younger brother Robert Sidney, took part in a skirmish against the Spanish at Zutphen, and was wounded of a musket shot that shattered his

thigh-bone. Some twenty-two days later Sidney died of the unhealed wound at not yet thirty-two years of age. His death occasioned much mourning in England as the Queen and her subjects grieved for the man who had come to exemplify the ideal courtier. It is said that Londoners, come out to see the funeral progression, cried out "Farewell, the worthiest knight that lived."

The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English.

Sir Philip Sidney

Astrophil and Stella

Structure, theme and convention in Sir Philip Sidney's sonnet sequence, *Astrophil and Stella*

By Donna

The names Astrophil and Stella mean Star-lover and Star, suggesting the impossibility of their union because of the distance between them.

The sixteenth century was a time of scientific, historical, archaeological, religious and artistic exploration. More attention was being allotted to probing into the depths of the human psyche and it was up to the artists and poets rather than the priests and scholars to examine and mirror these internal landscapes. The 'little world of man' [1] was reflected through various artistic forms, one of which was the sonnet, which was conventionally used for dedications, moral epigrams and the like. Traditionally most sonnets dealt with the theme of romantic love and in general the sonneteer dealt with the over-riding concern of the self and the other, the latter of which normally referred to a mistress, friend, or a familial relation. One of the first important artistic creations witnessed by the Elizabethans was Sidney's sonnet sequence called *Astrophil and Stella*, a variation on Petrarch's *Canzoniere*. Sidney who

was indeed acclaimed the 'English Petrarch', nevertheless wrote with his Elizabethan readers in mind as his characters spoke in English accents, voiced English concerns and evoked the spirit of the time.

The sequence, which like all Renaissance sequences is not a realistic autobiography, is about a man, Astrophil who is attracted to and in pursuit of a married woman, called Stella. On stealing a first kiss from Stella whilst she is asleep the male protagonist worries about her reaction lest she should find out, but later on chides himself for not taking advantage of the situation. He then goes on to recount how he is filled with hopes one minute and despair the next, whilst trying in vain to pursue her. In constantly being refused, he feels angered and offends her but does not wait too long before trying to seduce her yet again. After a few more refusals he is moved to desperation, evoking his misery in the last few sonnets.

Incidentally, although not a realistic autobiography, Stella is modeled on Penelope Devereux, who was supposed to marry Sidney but was then forced to marry Lord Rich, and 'phil' in 'Astrophil' is indeed an abbreviation of Sidney's first name, 'Philip'. After finding out about Penelope's marriage, fate had it that Sidney started to truly have feelings for her although by this time it was too late.

Astrophil's actions seem to be forgiven by some critics because he is after all driven by love. In fact Sidney's depiction of the male protagonist is one which makes some critics and readers empathize with him during his lamentations and praise of Stella. This may be because it is thought that Sidney's aim was to show readers how a man can let his emotions get the better of him, thereby leading him into eventual despair. It is through Astrophil's mistakes and negative example that Sidney is able to inculcate morality. This is also another typical quality of sonneteers, who aim to morally instruct through their art.

Beneath the witty surface of Astrophil's lamentations, Thomas P. Roche seems to feel that 'Sidney is using Astrophil's journey from hope to despair as a fictional device for the analysis of human desire in Christian terms.' [2] Consequently Roche points out that in witnessing Astrophil's despair the readers' reaction is supposed to make them conscious of his limitations from a Christian perspective.

Conventional topics such as addressing the moon, appealing to the world of sleep and dreams, bemoaning the lady's absence, praising her unique beauty and virtue, reprimanding her cold chastity and affirming his frustrated longings are all infused within the sequence, but the

impossibility of the hero and heroine's relationship, coupled with Astrophil's weak and uninspiring character, are highlighted in the complementing structural and thematic devices which Sidney adopts.

In the opening sonnet Sidney explains how he painfully resorted to every aid to compose his sequence, 'oft turning others' leaves' but that his impotence grew to a climax whereby it dawned on him to 'look in thy heart and write.' In writing about how to compose a love sonnet he did just that and what formed itself on the page before him was pure spontaneous feeling. However it is apparent that the hero is a combination of both the besotted lover and the self-critical poet. His emotional conflicts increase as he grows aware of his sexual needs despite his knowing that he is ultimately a product of Protestant training and needs to restrain his longings. It is a perpetual war of desire against reason and nature against nurture. Moreover he knows that no matter how much he craves for Stella it is a lost battle already and this is where the endless laments emerge. This incessant interplay of opposing forces, that is of paradoxes, is also considered an essential part of the sonnet structure.

The impossibility of a successful relationship is also highlighted through the sonnet title. Whilst normally, sonnet

sequences are entitled with the lady's name as she is typically regarded as the sole subject and object of the poetry, this poem's title: Astrophil and Stella immediately hints at the disjunction inherent in Sidney's subject. Other disjunctions are apparent, such as the title holding both a Greek name (Astrophil) and a Latin one (Stella). Furthermore the presence of the grammatical copula: 'and', immediately hints at the two people being a couple (like Romeo and Juliet for example), whilst in reality readers soon learn that they in fact are not. Indeed their names, which mean Star-lover and Star, further suggest the impossibility of their union because of the distance between them, whilst the name Stella immediately highlights how unattainable she is and that she is after all not quite as unique as Astrophil portrays her to be as her light is indeed shared and shown by thousands of other Stellas.

The impossibility of their union reflected in the title is reinforced in the sequence. Astrophil is adept at colouring a dark and sombre picture of his love life as, whilst his starlit stage has indeed become dark and dangerous, Stella's eyes which he calls, 'nature's chiefest work' are also black, 'sweet black which vailes the heav'nly eye.' The recurring metaphor of blackness is a result of his increasing preoccupations and he broods over the fact that his once starlit world seems none

other than his own living hell. The Christian opposition of heaven and hell is evident from the verse in sonnet 2, 'No doome should make one's heav'n become his hell.' Whilst the word 'doome' suggests the speaker's Christian damnation, it is nothing more than Stella's rebuttal.

Astrophil's, bewildered feelings are made more explicit and reach a climax in Sonnet 89, the only sonnet to employ just two rhymes, where in 'suffering the evils both of the day and night' his infernal desperation is manifested. He confuses day and night where both have become one to him and from this point on the rest of the sequence is shrouded in physical and moral darkness.

Astrophil's obsession with conquering Stella is further amplified when he invokes Morpheus, the son of Somnus, god of sleep who appears to dreamers in human shape and who will therefore bring Stella with him. He cannot bank on meeting Stella in the waking world, so he succumbs to and relies on the world of sleep even though he is well aware of its artifice.

Sidney's sequence also reverberates with one of Homer's epics. It has been suggested that the 108 sonnets represent the 108 suitors in Homer's Penelope, who played a game of trying to hit a stone called the Penelope stone as a way of deciding

who would win and court her. Just as the wooers banked on their fate pathetically and were aware of disappointment, so is Astrophil embarking on the same painful and disappointing journey.

Roche suggests that within the sonnet sequence there lies another Homeric metaphor. The 119 poems are one short of the number of months Ulysses spent returning home to Penelope and the very structure of the sequence therefore implies Astrophil's only-too-obvious defeat. Astrophil too may be looked upon as Ulysses' antithesis as he does not possess such qualities as strength, endurance and fidelity. Furthermore his lack of integrity and malice may be witnessed when he rebukes himself in Song II for not having seized the opportunity after secretly stealing a kiss from his sleeping sweetheart. He says;

Oh sweet kisse, but ah she is waking

. . .

Now will I away hence flee:
Foole, more Foole, for no more taking.

Astrophil presents Stella as his sun, which lights his world and warms his spirits yet as is always the case he finds a downside

to this, saying that, moreover, 'it burnes', concluding in the couplet that 'that my sunne go downe with meeker beames to bed.' It is evident that he wants these burning beams to become meeker, really referring to Stella's meekness or rather submission to him in bed. The frequent use of sexual allusions is used in the sequence to portray the problematic nature of Astrophil's paradoxical obsession as he craves for her love but for her sex too.

The structure of the sequence also has a vital role to play. The sequence was probably composed in 1581-82 and is made up of 108 sonnets combined in the Petrarchan manner with lyrics in different forms.

Sidney uses a variety of rhyme schemes, which reflect Wyatt's influence. The structure of the individual sonnets amount to an octave constrained by some interlacing rhymes, followed by a sestet where the rhyme scheme is completed in the first four verses indicating an unexpected change in feeling or argument in the final couplet. Whilst the punctuation seemingly divides the sestet into two tercets the rhyme scheme creates two groups made up of four and two verses consecutively. The couplet normally consists of a paradox reflecting Stella's influence on Astrophil who on the one hand yearns for his love to be reciprocated but on the other feels

angered at her for not quenching his sexual thirst; feelings which consistently run throughout the whole sequence.

The structure also enumerates the songs, which have a significant place in further explicating the course of events. Song I reflects Astrophil's idolatrous and blasphemous nature, Song II is about the stolen kiss, Song III is a praise of the power of music, IV is the conversation between the hero and heroine, in which she rejects his advances, and Songs V to IX evoke Aristophil's desperation. In fact in song V (which is the [illegible] longest song in the sequence) he vilifies Stella for her 'change of lookes' despite all the praise he heaped on her in the preceding 92 poems. What he obviously aims to do is seek revenge for his injured feelings by calling her all sorts of names such as a thief, a murderer, a tyrant, a witch and also a devil, the latter of which may preside over his hell. The irony lies in the fact that he used these same terms earlier on in the sequence in order to praise her.

Song VI is a debate between beauty and music, and some believe that it is more precisely a debate between Stella's beauty and Astrophil's music. He questions the reader about which of the two gratifies him more, and in describing how both the eye and ear are pleased to different degrees, his

thoughts swiftly become more abstract reflecting the conflicts he is enduring internally.

Song VII rightly voices the words of reason (following the footsteps of Petrarch in *Canzoniere*) pointing out Astrophil's foolishness by citing his own words from the previous stanzas.

Like other sonnet sequences Astrophil and Stella concentrates primarily on attitudes and states of mind, whereby all the poems centre on a single all-absorbing experience, in this case Astrophil's obsessive and rejected love. The autobiographical element is evident and the sonnets voice Sidney's desires, regrets, and conflicts of conscience, which resulted from the social pressures and moral restraints of his time. Even though the reverberating theme of the poem is one of moral bleakness it was nevertheless greatly admired and appreciated by the righteous and virtuous Elizabethans because of the conventions it adhered to, such as the didactical element, and the complementing structural features.

To The Moon

This sonnet is taken from *Astrophel and Stella*, a sequence of 108 sonnets and 11 songs in which the poet, Astrophel or Star-Lover, tells of his unfortunate love for Penelope Devereux, Stella, who has been married to another man. *Astrophel and Stella* is the first full sonnet sequence in English and derives from Petrarch's *Canoniere*. It is considered one of the greatest collections of love poems in the English language.

In this sonnet Sidney addresses the Moon as if it can hear and understand him. The theme is skillfully developed through a series of questions which reveal the poet's disappointment in love and his desire to know if his condition is an isolated case.

With how sad steps, O moon, thou climb'st the skies!
How silently, and with how wan a face!
What! May it be that even in heavenly place
That busy archer his sharp arrows tries?
Sure, if that long-with-love-acquainted eyes
Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case;
I read it in thy looks; thy languished grace
To me, that feel the like, thy state descries.

Then, even of fellowship, O Moon, tell me,
Is constant love deemed there but want of wit?
Are beauties there as proud as here they be?
Do they above love to be loved, and yet
Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess?
Do they call virtue there ungratefulness?

To Sleep

Come, sleep, O sleep, the certain knot of peace,
The baiting place of wit, the blame of woe,
The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
The'indifferent judge between the high and low;
With shield of proof shield me from out the prease
Of those fierce darts despair at me doth throw;
O make me in those civil wars to cease;
I will good tribune pay, if thou do so.
Take thou of me smooth pillows, sweetest bed,
A chamber deaf to noise and blind to light,
A rosy garland and a weary head;
And if these things, as being thine by right.
Move not thy heavy grace, thou shalt in me.
Livelier than elsewhere, Stella's image see.

Edmund Spenser

(1552-1599)

Born in London, Spenser first attended the Merchant Taylor's School, one of the best humanistic schools in London, and then he entered Pembroke College, Cambridge, as a 'sizar', that is one who was given free board in return for some services. After taking his B.A. in 1573and his M.A. in 1576, Spenser entered the service of several prominent men, such as the Bishop of Rochester, the Earl of Leicester, and Lord Grey of Wilton, Lord Deputy of Ireland. Except for two short visits to London from 1580 onward Spenser remained in Ireland where he married Elizabeth Boyle in 1594. He died in London in 1599 and was buried in Westminster Abbey, close to Chaucer's tomb.

Spenser's most important works are *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579) a series of twelve eclogues, one for each month of the year, dedicated to Sir Philip Sidny, the *Amoretti* (1595), a sonnet sequence which contains the poet's courtship of his future wife, *Epithalamion* (1595), a song in his bride's honour and *Astfophel* (1595), an allegorical elegy in pastoral form, written to the memory of Sir Philip Sidney, his friend and patron. But Spenser fame rests on his masterpiece, *The Faerie Queene*, a pastoral allegory of which only six of the

planned twelve books were completed. In this work Spenser used a new meter of his own creation, the Spenserian stanza, which consists of a nine-lined stanza rhyming *ababbcbcc* and ending with an Alexandrine line.

Spenser's greatness as a poet lies in his fertile imagination and in the beauty which pervades his poems. There is always a dreamy atmosphere about his verse and, although he celebrates physical beauty, he is strictly moral and always keeps his poetry from being gross and coarse. He made a great contribution to the development of English poetry for he experimented with it and enriched it with his superb Spenserian stanza which influenced many poets, among them Milton, Pope, Wordsworth, Keats and Shelly.

One Day I Wrote Her Name Upon The Stand

(Sonnet 75)

One day I wrote her name upon the stand
But came the waves and washed it away:
Agayne I wrote it with a second hand,
But came the tyde, and made my paynes his pray.
Vayne man, sayd she, that doest in vain assay,
A mortall thing so to immortalize,
For I my selve shall lyke to this decay,
And eek my name bee wyped out lykwize.
And so, (quod I) let baser things devize
To day in dust, but you shall live by fame:
My verse yor virtues rare shall eternize,
And in the heavens wryte your glorious name.
Where whenas death shall all the world subdew.
Our love shall live, and later life renew.

What distinguishes Spenser's poem from earlier poetry is the personal note it strikes. The poet places himself in the centre of the poem, telling us about his personal situation, emotions, and convictions. Such poetry, which expresses the poet's emotions, is called lyric. Lyric poetry became very popular in Spenser's time the Renaissance because people

began to be interested in the individual. In the Middle Ages man was seen as a part of a community. In the sixteenth century he came to be seen as an individual, unlike every other man. This individualism is reflected in Elizabethan poetry, of which Edmund Spenser is one of the greatest representatives.

The theme expressed in this sonnet is rather traditional, but Spenser shows his artistry by using an extremely melodious language enriched here and there by alliteration and assonance. In this sonnet, addressed to his wife, Spenser claims to give her immortality in his verse. He does so by starting from a very ordinary, very charming incident that may occur any day in summer beside the seaside. The situation is therefore a general one, but Spenser handles it in such a way as to make it intimately personal. His imagination creates a picture of tender young love through the conversation between his lady and himself, absorbed in each other, against the background of the eternal sea. He would like to preserve this experience for ever, but the waves wipe out her name just as cruel time destroys every man-made thing. Nevertheless he feels confident that he is able to immortalize his love by a different kind of writing, his poetry, no matter how short life on earth may be. At the same time the writing of the lady's name, which is the central image of the poem, is transferred

from earth to heaven. Love, poetry and religious belief are closely associated.

Technically, Spenser's poetry is at a very high level. He uses simple words so skillfully that they create a complete, harmonious picture. After the action of the first quatrain he switches to the dialogue in the second and the third, to conclude with the couplet which summarizes the theme of the sonnet. Spenser's perfect handling of vowels and the wavelike rhythm of his poem can only be appreciated when the sonnet is read aloud as to bring out its melody. His frequent use of alliteration binds the poem together.

(H.J. van Moll and N. Kortland, *Enjoying Literature*)

<u>**Question**</u>

Write a comparative essay on Spenser sonnet 75 and Shakespeare's "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day.

Christopher Marlowe

(1564-1593)

Christopher Marlow is an English playwright and poet. He is considered the first great English dramatist and the most important Elizabethan dramatist before William Shakespeare, although his entire activity as a playwright lasted only six years. Earlier playwrights had concentrated on comedy; Marlow worked on tragedy and advanced it considerably as a dramatic medium. His masterpiece is ***The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus***.

Born in Canterbury on February 6, 1564, the son of a shoemaker, Marlow was educated at the University of Cambridge.

Going to London, he associated himself with the Admiral's Men, a company of actors for whom he wrote most of his plays. He was reputedly a secret agent for the government and numbered some prominent men, including Sir Walter Raleigh, among his friends, but he led an adventurous and dissolute life and held unorthodox religious views. In 1593 he was denounced as a heretic; before any action could be taken against him, in May of that year he was stabbed to death in a tavern brawl at Deptford over payment of a dinner bill.

As a poet Marlow is known for "The Passionate Shepherd" (1599), which contains the lyric "come Live with Me and Be My Love." Marlow's mythological love poem, Hero and Leander, was unfinished at his death; it was completed by George Chapman and published in 1598. Marlow also translated works of the ancient Latin poets Lucan and Ovid. (*Encarta Encyclopedia*)

The Passionate Shepherd To His Love

Come live with me, and be my love;
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dales and fields
Woods, or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses,
And a thousand fragrant posies;
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;

A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull:
Fair-lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of t he purest gold;

A belt of straw and ivy-buds
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me, and be my love.

The shepherd-swains shall dance and sing
For they delight each May morning;
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my love.

Thomas Campion

Cherry Ripe

There is a garden in her face,
Where roses and white lilies grow;
A heavenly paradise is that place,
Wherein all pleasant fruits do flow.
There cherries grow which none may buy,
Till 'Cherry-ripe' themselves do cry.

Those cherries fairly do enclose
Of orient pearl a double row,
Which when her lovely laugher shows,
They look like rosebuds filled with snow,
Yet them nor peer nor prince can buy,
Till 'Cherry-ripe' themselves do cry.

Her eyes like angles watch them still;
Her brows like bended bows do stand,
Threatening with piercing frowns to kill
All that attempt with eye or hand
Those sacred cherries to come nigh,
Till 'Cherry-ripe' themselves do cry.

In this poem, Thomas Campion compares the features of a woman's face to the features of a garden. He takes this idea as the main theme of the poem.

There is a garden in her face

Where roses and white lilies grow.

The poet makes a comparison between the face of a woman and a garden full of roses and fruits.

Wherein all pleasant fruits do flow

There cherries grow ...

Then he depicts every feature of her face to how beautiful she is:

Her eyes like angles watch them still;

Her brows like bended bows do stand,

This poem consists of three stanzas, each containing six lines written in regular rhyme. The rhyme of each stanza is *ab ab cc*.

There is a garden in her face, ...*a*

Where roses and white lilies grow; ....*b*

A heavenly paradise is that place,......*a*

Wherein all pleasant fruits do flow. ....*b*

There cherries grow which none may buy, ...*c*

Till 'Cherry-ripe' themselves cry. .....*c*

Undoubtedly, this regular rhyme adds to the musicality of the poem and helps create the general atmosphere of the poem. Moreover, the lines of t his poem are written in regular rhythm which comes as a result of regular feet. The lines are written in iambic tetrameter. This regular rhythm adds a cheerful tone to the poem and is considered a source of music.

Imagery is one of the devices which the poet makes much use of. There is visual imagery represented in the description of the features of the woman's face. This allows us to imagine and visualize this beautiful picture.

There is a garden in her face,
Where roses and white lilies grow;
A heavenly paradise is that place,
Wherein all pleasant fruits do flow.

Moreover, there is much use of figurative language. The whole poem can be grasped as an "extended metaphor" because the poet develops just an analogy throughout the poem. Therefore, the poem contains an extended metaphor comparing the features of a woman's face to the features of a garden. Also, there is a simile in "Her eyes like angles watch them still" where he likens the woman's eyes to "angles". There is also

another simile in "her brows like bended bows do". This use of imagery enriches the theme of the poem and makes it clear.

Moreover the poet makes use of personification. Personification is a figure of speech by which, under the influence of strong feeling, the poet attributes life and mind to impersonal and inanimate things. In "Till 'Cherry-ripe' themselves do cry' the poet personifies the cherries and makes them cry. Of course, this makes the idea more concrete.

The poet uses other sound devices like alliteration and consonance. Alliteration is the repetition of the same sound at the beginning if two or more words in the same line. There is alliteration in words like "where ...white", "paradise ....place", "fruits ....flow", "lovely ....laughter", and "peer ....prince". The use of alliteration helps to create the general atmosphere of the poem and links words at the level of sound.

The language of this poem tends to be romantic to suite its theme. The poet appeals to nature in selecting his images and language. He uses words like "garden", "roses", 'paradise', 'fruits, 'cherry', and 'ripe'. Also he uses images like "they look like rose buds" and "her eyes like angles". This, of course, reinforces the idea and makes the poem look like a piece of nature.

METAPHYSICAL POETRY

Metaphysical Poetry

Helen Gardener on Metaphysical poetry

Concentration. The first characteristic of metaphysical poetry, according to Helen Gardener, is its concentration. The reader is held to an idea or a line of argument. He is not invited to pause upon a passage and reflect upon it. Metaphysical poetry demands that we pay attention and read on. A metaphysical poem tends to be brief and is always closely woven.

The Expanded Epigram. Concentration and a sinewy strength of style are the marks of Donne's poetry, and such adjectives as "strenuous" and "masculine" are applicable to it. Behind much of the metaphysical poetry lies the classical epigram, and there is some truth in saying that a metaphysical poem is an expanded epigram. Almost all metaphysical poets exercised their skill in the writing of epigrams, and the vogue of the epigram helped to form the taste for witty poetry.

Versification. The desire for concentration and concision marks also the verse forms characteristic of the 17th-century lyric. It appears in the fondness for a line of eight syllables rather than a line of ten, and in the use of stanzas employing lines of varying length into which the sense seems packed, or of stanzas built on very short lines. The metaphysical poets

favoured either very simple verse-forms, octosyllabic couplets or quatrains, or else stanzas created for the particular poem, in which length of line and the rhyme-scheme artfully enforced the sense.

Fondness for Conceits; Conceits as instruments. Another characteristic of metaphysical poetry, according to Helen Gardener, is its fondness for conceits. This is, indeed, its most immediately striking feature. A conceit is a comparison whose ingenuity is more striking than its justness, or at least is more immediately striking. All comparisons discover likeness in things unlike; a comparison becomes a conceit when we are made to concede likeness while being strongly conscious of unlikeness. A brief comparison can be a conceit if two things patently unlike, or which we should never think of together, are shown to be alike in a single point in such a way, or in such a context, that we feel their incongruity. Elizabethan poetry abounds in conceits. But what differentiates the conceits of the metaphysical poets is that these conceits are employed not for their own sake but to persuade, to define, or to prove a point. In a metaphysical poem the conceits are instruments of definition in an argument or instruments to persuade. However, the first impression that a conceit makes is of ingenuity rather than of justice; the metaphysical conceit

aims at making us concede justness while admiring ingenuity. Thus, in one of the most famous all metaphysical conceits, Donne compares two lovers with the two legs of a compass.

The Abrupt, personal Openings of metaphysical poems. Argument and persuasion, and the use of the conceit as their instrument are the body of the metaphysical poem. But its quintessence or soul is the vivid imagining of a moment of experience, or of a situation out of which the need to argue or persuade or define arises. Metaphysical poetry is famous for its abrupt, personal openings in which a man speaks to his mistress, or addresses his God, or sets a scene or calls us to mark this or see that.

A Strong Sense of Actual Situations. A large number of metaphysical poems are inspired by actual occasions either of personal, or less often, public interest. The metaphysical poets convey a strong sense of actual and often very ordinary situations. A reader may at times exclaim: 'Who would ever think such a thought in such a situation?" Donne is, indeed, remarkable for having extraordinary thoughts in ordinary situations. Many of Donne's love-poems have the right to the title metaphysical in its true sense, since they raise, even when they do jot explicitly discuss, the great metaphysical question of the relation of the spirit and the senses.

Religious Poetry of the Metaphysical poets. Many of the metaphysical poets were men of the world who knew its ways. Their wit goes with a strong sense of the realities of daily life, the common concerns of men and women. Herbert, for instance, tells us in one of his poems that he knows the ways of Learning, Honour, and Pleasure. Indeed, the strength of the religious poetry of the metaphysical poets is that they bring to their prayer and meditation and praise so much experience that is not in itself religious. Here too the poems create for us particular situations out of which prayer or meditation arises: Donne riding westward, or stretched out upon his death-bed; Herbert praying all day long "but no hearing", or noting his own whitening hair, or finding after a night of weariness joy in the morning; Vaughan walking to spend his hour, or sitting solitary at midnight thinking of departed friends. Many metaphysical poems are poetical meditations of the religious kind. But every religious writer treats religious themes in his own individual manner. How individually, for instance, Herbert treats the old theme of the stages of human life and the traditional lessons of the *Ars Moriendi* in the poem *Mortification!* Who else but Herbert would show man as unconsciously amassing at each stage what he needs for his burial? And how tenderly and sympathetically he sums up

each stage of human life, catching its very essence: the dreamless sleep of boyhood, the retraction of energies and interests in middle age, and the pathos of old age unable to speak for rheum. The comparison of sleep to death, and of a bed to a grave, is common enough, but it is transformed by the further haunting image:

> Successive nights, like rolling waves,
> Convey them quickly, who are bound for death.

The poem concludes with an old moral; but the moral is made new by the time we reach it because Herbert has so expanded our understanding of our dying life. The metaphysical style heightens and liberates personality. It is essentially a style in which individuality is expressed.

Jim hunter on Metaphysical Poetry

Metaphysical in a Literal Sense. Jim hunter, like Helen gardener, gives us an illuminating analysis of the characteristics of metaphysical poetry. Strictly speaking, "metaphysical", he says, means: "concerned with the fundamental problems of the nature of the universe, and man's place in life." In this sense the poetry of Donne and his successors may certainly be called metaphysical because metaphysical and religious concerns do appear in it. Vaughan, for instance, is literally metaphysical in his subject-matter when he says in *The World*: "I saw eternity the other night", etc. much metaphysical poetry is religious and so might be expected to be about eternity, the soul, and the mind.

Intellect and Emotion. Metaphysical poetry is the product of both intellect and emotion. Neither strong feeling nor intellect by itself would make good poetry. The brain and the soul should work together in the process of creation. We are not fully appreciating a metaphysical poem unless we see both brain and soul at work.

The Use of Conceits. Metaphysical poetry employs plenty of ingenious conceits, but it employs them as a means of illustration or persuasion. The conceits in many cases are the action of the poem; the poem could not be resolved without the

conceit, and it develops through the conceit. Although the strangeness or cleverness of a conceit my interest us for its own sake, yet it is seriously used to support a case. For example, Herbert's poetry is a kind of preaching, an arguing for God.

Concrete Imagery. The metaphysical poets are fond of the concrete metaphors which they use in the face of some of the most abstract problems of thought. Marvell and Vaughan particularly show this tendency. Here are some examples from Vaughan's poetry:

1. with what flowers,
And shoots of glory, my soul breaks, and buds!
(*The Morning Watch*)

2. But felt through all this fleshly dress
Bright shoots of everlastingness. (*The Retreat*)

3. I saw Eternity the other night
Like A great Ring of Pure and endless light,.... (*The World*)

Paradox. This is a frequent incidental device. Perhaps the most subtle use of paradox occurs in Marvell's *The Definition of Love* where the poet says that his love "was begotten by Despair upon impossibility". In this poem each stanza is a brief conceit; and the more cleverly the poet defines his love,

the more effectively he makes his point that it is impossible. Herbert's poem *Affliction* ends thus with a paradox:

Ah, my dear God! Though I am clean forgot,

Let me not love thee, if I love thee not.

Conciseness. An epigrammatic conciseness is one of the strengths of metaphysical poetry. All the metaphysical poets show this terseness and neatness of style. Often within the unified structure of a poem, epigrams appear, and are held together by rhyme, alliteration, and even metre so that they do not seem fragmentary. Here is an example from Herbert:

Beauty and beauteous words should go together.

And here is one from Vaughan:

But life is, what none can express,

A quickness, which my God hath kissed.

The Elements of Drama. An important characteristic of metaphysical poetry is the element of drama which is most immediately apparent in the opening lines of poems. Here are some examples, from Herbert and Vaughan, of such opening lines:

I struck the board, and cried

"I will abroad". (*The Collar*)

The harbingers are come. See, see their mark.

(*The Forerunners*)

They are all gone into the world of light!

The Sense of Humour. Almost all metaphysical poems have an edge of dry humour to them, which does not invalidate what they say but perhaps sobers it and makes it more reasonable.

Intelligence. As stated above, metaphysical poetry is sometimes philosophical; it is given to the use of conceits, to paradox and epigram, to dramatic speech-rhythms and colloquialism; and it is tinged with humour. But perhaps the most obvious characteristic is the sheer intellectual strength of this poetry. It makes the poems sometimes difficult, but it also makes them extremely wise.

John Donne

Born into a Roman Catholic family, John Donne attended the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and studied law at the Inns of Court, but, being a catholic, he could not take any degrees. He was a man of restless vitality and in his early years, he lived as a brilliant youth and took an active part in London social life. Later he was converted to Anglicanism and, in 1615, he took Holy Orders, becoming Dean of St. Paul's in 1612. He was a great preacher and his sermons are famous for their rich imagination and intellectual complexity.

The poetry of John Donne, the father of 'a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets', in Dr. Johnson's words, is in marked contrast with that of his contemporaries and predecessors. He rejected conventional Elizabethan imagery and brought literature down to earth and reality. Most of Donne's poetry was published posthumously and consists of love poems, sonnet5s, elegies, satires and religious poems. His love lyrics display genuine passion and imaginative ardour as well as youthful impudence and cynicism. The ladies of his poems are no longer models of purity, constancy and other virtues, but he pictures women as they really are, and love as a fever of the body. His religious poems contain the same vigour as his love poems and are pervaded with deep emotions and

spiritual sufferings. Donne expressed his feelings in a rather difficult language largely made of 'conceits', that is involved and elaborate phrases, complex metaphors, striking paradoxes, startling parallels, intellectual analogies, unexpected comparisons and turns of phrase. Memorable among his poems are 'The Good Morrow', 'The Flea', 'The Autumnal', 'A Valediction: Forbidding mourning, 'The anniversaries', 'A Hymn to Christ' and the Holly Sonnets 'Death'.

The love poetry of John Donne

by Ian Mackean

Donne's Songs and Sonnets do not describe a single unchanging view of love; they express a wide variety of emotions and attitudes, as if Donne himself were trying to define his experience of love through his poetry. Love can be an experience of the body, the soul, or both; it can be a religious experience, or merely a sexual one, and it can give rise to emotions ranging from ecstasy to despair. Taking any one poem in isolation will give us a limited view of Donne's attitude to love, but treating each poem as part of a totality of experience, represented by all the Songs and Sonnets, it gives us an insight into the complex range of experiences that can be grouped under the single heading 'Love'.

In reading Donne one soon learns that an attitude expressed in one poem is not to be taken as absolute and exclusive. One of Donne's characteristics is that he freely contradicts himself from one poem to another. The title of this poem, The Extasie, implies that love is a religious experience, just as the diction of To his Mistris Going to Bed conveyed sex as a religious experience. The religious metaphors give a hyperbolic

intensity to his imagery, but the ideas expressed in The Extasie are firmly rooted in the scientific theories of his day.

The inherent superiority of the spiritual level, and the part love can play in refining man's nature towards the spiritual, is expressed in these lines:

If any, so by love refin'd,
That he soules language understood,
And by good love were grown all minde

The scientific framework of Donne's view of love is also seen here:

But as all severall soules containe
Mixture of things, they know not what,
Love, these mixt soules, doth mixe againe,
And makes both one, each this and that.

Just as the four elements, earth, air, fire, and water were supposed to combine to form new substances, so two souls mix to form a new unity. The strength and durability of this new unit is dependent upon how well the elements of the two

souls are balanced, as we see from these lines from The Good-Morrow:

What ever dyes, was not mixt equally;
It our two loves be one, or, thou and I
Love so alike, that none doe slacken, none can die.

A good example of this state, where two lovers' souls cannot be separated, even when they are physically far apart, is seen in A Valediction: forbidding mourning:

If they be two, they are two so
As stiffe twin encompasses are two,
Thy soule the fixt foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th'other doe.

The idea of two coming together to form one is very important in Donne's view of love. When a couple find perfect love together they become all-sufficient to one another, forming a world of their own, which has no need of the outside world. This idea is expressed in these lines from The Sunne Rising:

She'is all States, and all Princes, I,

Nothing else is.

Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;
This bed thy centre is, these walls, thy spheare.

And again it in The Good-Morrow:

For love, all love of other sights controules,
And makes one little roome, an everywhere.

For Donne love transcends all worldly values. As we see in The Canonization, values such as wealth and glory have no place in the world of love.

With wealth your state, your minde with Arts improve,
Take you a course, get you a place,
Observe his honour, or his grace,
Or the Kings reall, or his stamped face
Contemplate; what you will, approve,
So you will let me love.

Like love itself, the women to whom Donne's verses are addressed are usually praised in hyperbolic terms. In The

Sunne Rising her eyes shine brighter than the sun. And in The Dreame she is praised as a being above the level of angels.

Yet I thought thee
(For thou lov'st truth) an Angell, at first sight,
But when I saw thou saw'st my heart,
And knew'st my thoughts, beyond an Angels art,
When thou knew'st what I dreamt, when thou knew'st when
Excess of joy would wake me, and cam'st then,
I do confesse, it could not chuse but bee
Profane, to thinke thee any thing but thee.

This reverence for woman sometimes leads Donne close to adopting the traditional attitude of the courtly lover [3], who suffers through being in love with a woman, usually already married, who scorns him. An example of this kind of love is suggested by the references to the symptoms of love in The Canonization:

Alas, alas, who's injur'd by my love?
What merchant ships have my sighs drown'd?
Who saies my teares have overflow'd his ground?
When did my colds a forward spring remove?

When did the heats which my veines fill
Adde one man to the plaguie Bill?

The courtly love ideal, however, is in conflict with Donne's ideal of two well-matched and well-balanced lovers whose souls unite to form one. In the poem Loves Deitie he expresses his contempt for the courtly ideal, which he sees as a corruption of the true nature of love.

I cannot thinke that hee, who then lov'd most,
Sunke so low, as to love one which did scorne,
. . . It cannot bee
Love, till I love her, that loves mee.

In fact Donne is unusual, if not unique, for his era in that courtly love hardly appears in his poetry at all. Courtly love seems to depend on the lover being unsuccessful, whereas Donne rejoices in success at every level. And the courtly love poet always expresses the same experience of love, the range of situations and emotions dealt with being very limited. In contrast Donne expresses an enormously wide range of feelings in his *Songs and Sonnets*, all relating to the experience of love, but varying from the heights of ecstasy to the depths

of despair. This variety of feeling lends Donne's poetry much of its impact, for we seem to be reading an individual's personal experience of love, and not just a poet's contribution to a long-standing tradition of poetic love.

We have seen how in The Extasie Donne describes love as a sublime union of two souls. This perhaps is the highest form of love, but by no means the only one. The Dreame expresses a passionate mood of a more down-to-earth nature.

In The Flea Donne adopts a cynical and rather flippant tone towards his woman, using his wit to try to belittle and overcome her moral arguments, in favour of immediate pleasure.

Marke but this flea, and marke in this,
How little that which thou deny'st me is

For Donne, love can lead to suffering and disillusionment as well as to ecstasy. A Nocturnall upon S. Lucie's day, being the shortest day is an extremely powerful evocation of the suffering caused by the death of a loved one, an experience

which takes him beyond suffering to a state of absolute nothingness.

. . . Yea plants, yea stones detest
And love; All, all some properties invest;
If I an ordinary nothing were,
As shadow, 'a light, and body must be here.

But I am none;

In Twicknam Garden Donne expresses extremes of disillusionment, his view of love here being totally opposed to his view in The Extasie:

The spider love, which transubstantiates all,
And can convert Manna to gall,

And his view of woman is totally opposed to the view expressed in most of his love poems:

Nor can you more judge womans thought by teares,
Than by her shadow, her what she weares.
O perverse sexe, where none is true but shee,

Who's therefore true, because her truth kills mee.

Perhaps the most extreme anti-love poem of Donne's, and certainly the most un-courtly, is The Apparition. The bitterness expressed here is so intense that it is surely a hate poem; it opens:

When by thy scorne, O murdress, I am dead,

And continues with the lover threatening to haunt his mistress after his death.

Finally we ought to consider whether Donne's poetry expresses real love at all, or whether, as some critics suggest, he was merely a talented poet using his wit and ingenuity to create clever poems. Johnson said of the Metaphysical poets: 'Their courtship was void of fondness and their lamentation of sorrow.' He did not feel that Donne's poetry moved the affections, or that Donne had necessarily felt the emotions in order to write the poems.

Donne's poems are extraordinarily witty and ingenious, but this does not exclude the possibility that they also contain strong emotion. Donne's poems are quite capable of stirring

the emotions, and no matter how clever his conceits, or revolutionary his thought, his poems would not work without a seed of genuine feeling at their centre.

The Undertaking

I have done one braver thing
Than all the *Worthies* did,
Yet a braver thene doth spring,
Which is, o keep that hid.

It were but madness now t'impart
The skill of specular stone,
When he which can have learn'd the art
To cut it, can finde none.

So, if I now should utter this
Others (because no more
Such stuffe to worke upon, there is,)
Would love but as before.

But he who lovelinesse within
Hath found, all outward loathes,
For he who colour loves, and skinne,
Loves but their oldest clothes.

If, as I have, you also doe
Vertue' attir'd in woman see,

And dare love that, and say so too,
Forget the Hee and Sheee;

And if this love, though placed so,
From prophane men you hide,
Which will no faith on this bestow,
Or, if they doe, deride:
Then you'have done a braver thing
Than all the *Worthies* did;
And a braver thence will spring;
Which is, to keepe that hid.

The Indifferent

I can love both fair and browne,
Her whom abundance melts, and her whom want betaries;
Her who loves loneness best, and her who masks and plays;
Her whom the country formed, and whom the town,
Her who believes, and her who tries;
Her who still weeps with spongy eyes,
And her who is dry cork and never cries.
I can love her, and her, and you, and you;
I can lo9ve any, so she be not true.

Will no other vice content you?
Will it not serve your turn to do as did your mothers?
Or have you all old vices spent, and now would find out others?

Or doth a fear that men are true torment you?
O we are not, be not you so;
Let me- and do you- twenty know;
Rob me, but bind me not, and let me go.
Must I, who came to travel through you,
Grow your fixed subject, because your are true?
Venus heard me sigh this song;

And by love's sweetest part, variety, she swore,
She heard not this till now; it should be so no more.
She went, examined, and returned ere long,
And said; Alas! Some two or three
Poor heretics in love there be,
Which think to stablish dangerous constancy.
But I have told them, "Since you will be true,
You shall be true to them who're false to you."

Robert Herrick

Born in London, Robert Herrick was educated at Cambridge. He entered the Church and, in 1629 was appointed vicar of Dean Prior in Devonshire. In 1647, during the Civil War, he lost his post owing to his royalist sympathies, but was restored to it after Charles II's return to England.

Herrick's chief works are *Hesperides* (1648), a miscellany of love lyrics, folk songs and pastoral poems dealing mostly with country life, and *The Noble Numbers*, also published in 1648, a collection of short religious poems.

Herrick's poems are notable for their gaiety, their glancing charm and lyrical power. Most of his love poems became very popular in the 17th century and are still considered unique among this form for style, melody and feeling.

To Daffodils

Robert Herrick

The subject of this poem is the frailty of human life. Instead of making an abstract complaint, the poet achieves his purpose through a series of effective comparisons with creatures of nature which have very short life-spans. The use of similes is typical of the poets belonging to the Metaphysical school.

Fair Daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon;
As yet the early rising sun
Has not attained his noon.
Stay, stay,
Until the hasting day
Has run
But to the even-song;
And, having prayed together, we
Will go with you along,

We have short time to stay, as you,
We have as short a spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay,
As you, or anything.

We die
As your hours do, and dry
Away,
Like to the summer's rain;
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,
Ne'er to be found again.

"To Daffodils" can be considered a symbolic poem as it refers to the shortness of human life and eventuality of death. In this poem, the poet addresses daffodils which are beautiful flowers. This flower seems to be a symbol of a dying girl. The poet is quite sad as the life of this flower is short and hurries to its eventual end that is death. The poet compares the human life to that of daffodils which "haste away so soon" it is also like "the summer's rain" or "the pearls morning's dew." Therefore, he implores daffodils to stay longer to enjoy its beauty. He begs it to wait even to the "even sing" to say their prayers together so that god may endow them with longer life.

Then the poet moves to talk about the eventual end that awaits all living creatures. Every thing in this world has "short time" to live and enjoy. Our lives as human beings are as short as that of flowers and spring. Our lives have short moments

like the rain of the summer or the "pearls of morning's dew". Once this life comes to an end, it never comes back again. From the very beginning, the poet uses a tone of sadness that reflects his reaction and attitude towards death. This tone is realized through words like "weep", "haste", "decay", and "die". These words help to attain the atmosphere of sorrow and sadness.

The poem consists of two stanzas, each containing ten lines written a regular rhythm that adds to the musicality of the poem. Moreover, the rhyme scheme of this poem is regular. The two stanza are rhyming with each other. Each stanza follows the same systematic pattern which is *abcbddceae.*

Fair Daffodils, we weep to see ....a
You haste away so soon ....b
As yet the early rising sun c
Has not attained his noon. ....b
Stay, stay, ... d
Until the hasting day ... d
Has run c
But to the even-song; ...... e
And, having prayed together, we ......a
Will go with you along, ... e

Herrick uses some other technical devices to produce music like alliteration. Alliteration is the repetition of the repetition of the same sound at the beginning of two or more words within the same line. This alliteration is found in words like "we...weep", "so....soon", "Has...his", "stay....stay". This use of alliteration helps to link words at the level of sound and creates music.

Imagery is extensively used in this poem to reflect the emotional attitude of the poet under the influence of strong feelings. The poet attributes life to this flower in a wonderful personification. He addresses daffodils as if they were human beings:

Fair Daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon.

In addition, there are many similes used by the poet to depict the shortness of human life and also the life of this flower. He compares the shortness of life to that of "the summer rain" or the pearls of morning's dew". This use of imagery reinforces the idea as it makes it more concrete.

To Blossoms

Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,
Why do ye fall so fast?
Your date is not so past;
But you may stay yet here a while,
To blush and gently smile;
And go at last.

What, were ye born to be
An hour or half's delight;
And so to bid goodnight?
'T was pity Nature brought e forth
Merely to shew your worth,
And lose you quite

But you are lovely leaves, where we
May read how soon things have
Their end, though ne'er so brave:
And after they have shown their pride,
Like you a while: They glide

Into the Grave

This poem deals with the same idea discussed in the previous poem "To Daffodils". He discusses the idea of shortness of life as the main theme:

Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,

Why do ye fall so fast?

The poet asks these beautiful trees to stay and not to leave:

But you may stay yet here a while,

To blush and gently smile;

Then he accuses "Nature" of bringing death to such beautiful things. Again the poet returns to idea of death and acknowledges that

And after they have shown their pride,

Like you a while: They glide

Into the Grave

Thus it is obvious that the poet stresses the idea of the shortness of life.

This poem consists of three stanzas, each containing six lines varying in length. There are long lines and short ones which lead to a variety of meter. This reminds us with Victorian poetry in which there lack of prosody. Sometimes the line does not have a full meaning of a complete sentence.

The poet breaks his line so that the sense of the sentence runs over into the following line as in:

But you are lovely leaves, where we
May read how soon things have
Their end, though ne'er so brave:

Imagery is used in this poem in two ways. Herrick uses visual imagery as he describes these flowers while they are falling and gliding into grave. This gives the reader the opportunity to imagine this picture and fall in the atmosphere of sorrow and sadness:

And after they have shown their pride,
Like you a while: They glide
Into the Grave

Moreover, the poet uses personification in "To blush and gently smile". Personification is a figure of speech by which, under the influence of strong feelings, the poet attributes life and mind to impersonal and inanimate things. So, the poet personifies these flowers and make them smile. There are similar personifications in "to bid good-night", "Nature brought ye forth". Also, in a wonderful metaphor, the poet compares the beautiful flowers to an open book where any one an read and know facts of life:

But you are lovely leaves, where we
May read how soon things have
Their end, though ne'er so brave:

It is obvious that the poet appeals to nature to convince us with his idea and this is a truly romantic attitude.

The whole poem can be seen as a kind of symbolism. The poet not only refers to the shortness of flowers' life but he also means the shortness of human life. Human life is quite short and one must not waste his life in trivial matters.

How does the following poem represent the Metaphysical qualities and the distinctive features of George Herbert's artistry?

Vertue

Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and skie:
The dew shall weep thy fall to night;
For thou must die.

Sweet rose, whose hue angrie and brave
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye:
Thy root is ever in its grave,
And thou must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,
A box where sweets compacted lie;
My musick shows ye have your closes,
And all must die.

Onely a sweet and virtuous soul,
Like season'd timber, never gives;
But though the whole world turn to coal,
Then chiefly lives.

MILTON AND THE PURITAN AGE

(B.R. Mullik)

The seventeenth century up to 1660, when monarchy was restored and Charles II came to throne, was dominated by Puritanism, and it may be called the Puritan Age or the Age of Milton who was the noblest representative of the Puritan spirit. Broadly speaking, the Puritan movement in literature may be considered as the second and greater Renaissance, marked by the rebirth of the moral nature of man which followed the intellectual awakening of Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Though the Renaissance brought with it culture, it was mostly sensuous and pagan, and it needed some sort of moral sobriety and profundity which were contributed by the Puritan movement. Moreover, during the Renaissance period despotism was still the order of the day, and in politics and religion unscrupulousness and fanaticism were rampant. The Puritan movement stood for liberty of the people from the shackles of the despotic ruler as well as the introduction of morality and high ideals in politics. Thus it had two objects-personal righteousness and civil and religious liberty. In other words, it aimed at making men honest and free.

Though during the Restoration period the Puritans began to be looked upon as narrow- minded, gloomy

dogmatists, who were against all sorts of recreations and amusements, in fact they were not so. Moreover, though they were profoundly religious, they did not form a separate religious sect. It would be a grave travesty of facts if we call Milton and Gromwell, who fought for liberty of the people against the tyrannical rule of Charles I, as narrow- minded fanatics. They were the real champions of liberty and stood for toleration.

The name Puritan was at first given to those who advocated certain changes in the form of worship of the reformed English Church under Elizabeth. As King Charles I and his councilors, as well as some of the clergymen with Bishop Laud as their leader, were opposed to the movement, Puritanism in course of time became a national movement against the tyrannical rule of the king, and stood for the liberty of the people. Of course, the extremists among Puritans were fanatics and stern, and the long- protracted struggle against despotism made even the milder ones hard and narrow. So when Charles I was defeated and beheaded in 1649 and Puritanism came out triumphant with the establishment of the Commonwealth under Cromwell, severe laws were passed. Many simple modes of recreation and amusement were banned, and an austere standard of living was imposed on an

unwilling people. But when we criticise the puritan for his restrictions on simple and innocent pleasures of life, we should not forget that it was the same very Puritan who fought for liberty and justice, and who through self- discipline and austere way of living overthrew despotism and made the life and property of the people of England safe from the tyranny of rulers.

In literature of the Puritan Age we find the same confusion as we find in religion and politics. The medieval standard of chivalry, the impossible loves romances, which we find in Spenser and Sidney, have completely disappeared. As there were no fixed literary standards, imitations of older poets and exaggerations of the metaphysical poets replaced the original, dignified and highly imaginative compositions of the Elizabethan writers. The literary achievements of this so-called gloomy age are not of a high order, but it had the honour of producing one solitary master of verse, whose work would shed lustre on any age or people- John Milton, who was the noblest and indomitable representative of the Puritan spirit to which he gave a most lofty and enduring expression.

MITON

(1608-1674)

Milton, the greatest poet of the Puritan age, stands head and shoulders above all his contemporaries. Though he completely identified himself with Puritanism, he possessed such a strong personality that he cannot be taken to represent anyone but himself Paying a tribute to the dominating personality of Milton, Words- worth wrote the famous line:

Ihy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart

Though Milton Praised Spenser, Shakespeare and Ben Johnson as poets, he was different from them all. We do not find the exuberance of Spenser in his poetry. Unlike Shakespeare, Milton is superbly egoistic. In this verse, which is harmonious and musical, we find no trace of the harshness of Ben Johnson. In all his poetry, Milton sings about himself and his own lofty soul. Being a deeply religious man and also endowed with artistic merit of a high order, he combined in himself the spirit of the Renaissance and the Reformation. In fact no other English poet was so profoundly religious and so much of an artist.

Milton was a great scholar of classical as well as Hebrew literature. He was also a child of the Renaissance, and

great humanist. As an artist he may be called the last Elizabethan. From his young days he began to look upon poetry as a serious business of life; and he made up his mind to dedicate himself to it, and , in course of time, write a poem "which the world would not let die".

Milton's early poetry is lyrical. The important poems of the early period are: *The Hymn on the nativity* (1629); L'*Allegro, It Penseroso* (1632); Comus (1634) and ; Lycidas (1637). The Hymn written when Milton was only twenty- one shoes that his lyrical genius was already highly developed. The complementary poems L'Allegero and It Penseroso, are full of very pleasing descriptions of rural scenes and recreations in Spring and Autumn. *L'Allegro* represents the poet in a gay and merry mood and it paint an idealized picture of rustic life from dawn to dusk. It Penseroso is written in serious and meditative strain. In it the poet praises the passive joys of contemplative life. The poet extols the pensive thoughts of a recluse who spends his days contemplating the calmer beauties of nature. It these two poems, the lyrical genius of Milton is at its best.

Lycidas is a pastoral elegy, and it is the greatest of its type in the English language. It was written to mourn the death of Milton's friend, Edward King, but it also contains serious criticism of contemporary religion and politics.

Comus marks the development of Milton's mind from the merely pastoral and idyllic to the more serious and purposive tendency. The Puritanic element antagonistic to the prevailing looseness in religion and politics becomes more prominent. But in spite of its serious and didactic strain, it retains the lyrical tone which is so characteristic of Milton's early poetry.

Besides these poems, a few great sonnets such as ***When the assault was intended to the city,*** also belongs to Milton's early period. Full of deeply – felt emotions, these sonnets are among the noblest in the English language, and they bridge the gulf between the lyrical tone of Milton's early poetry, and the deeply moral and didactic tone of his later poetry.

When the Civil War broke out in 1642, Milton threw himself heart and soul into the struggle against King Charles I. He devoted the best years of his life, when his poetical powers were at their peak, to this national movement. Finding himself unfit to fight as a soldier he became the Latin Secretary to Cromwell. This work he continued to do till 1649, when Charles I was defeated and Commonwealth was proclaimed under Cromwell. But when he returned to poetry to accomplish the ideal he had in his mind, Milton found himself

completely blind. Moreover, after the death of Crowell, and the coming of Charles II to the throne, Milton became friendless. His own wide and daughters turned against him . But undaunted by all these misfortunes , Milton girded up his loins and wrote his greatest poetical works- *Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained and Samson Agonisted.*

The subject- matter of *Paradise Lost* consists of the casting out from Heaven of the fallen angels, their planning of revenge in Hell, Satan's flight, Man's temptation and fall from grace, and the promise of redemption. Against this vast background Milton projects his own philosophy of the purposes of human existence, and attempts "to justify the ways of God to men". On account of the richness and profusion of its imagery, descriptions of strange lands and seas, and the use of strange geographical names Paradise Lost is called the last great Elizabethan poem. But its perfectly organised design, its firm outlines and Latinised dictions make it essentially a product of the neo- classical or the Augustan period in English literature. In Paradise Lost the most prominent is the figure of Satan who possesses the qualities of Milton himself, and who represents indomitable heroism of the Puritans against Charles I:

What though the field be lost?

All is not lost; the unconquerable will,
Ans study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield,
And what is elso; not to be overcome.

It is written in blank verse of the Elizabethan dramatists but it is hardened and strengthened to suit the requirements of an epic poet.

Paradise Regained which deals with the subject of Temptation in the Wilderness is written, unlike *Paradise Lost*, in the form of discussion and not action. Not so sublime as Paradise Lost, it has a quieter atmosphere, but it does not betray a decline in poetic power. The mood of the poet has become different. The central figure is Christ, having the Puritanic, austere and stoic qualities rather than the tenderness which is generally associated with him.

In Samson Agonists Milton deals with an ancient Hebrew legend of Samson, the mighty champion of Israel, now blind and scorned, working as a slave among Philistines. This tragedy, which written on the Greek model , is charged with the tremendous personality of Milton himself, who in the character of the blind giant, Samson, surrounded by enemies,

projects his own unfortunate experience in the reign of Charles II.

Eyeless in Gaza at the Mill with slaves

The magnificent lyrics in this tragedy, which express the heroic faith of the long- suffering Puritans, represent the summit of technical excellence achieved by Milton.

After a certain initial neglect, due largely to political reasons, Milton soon came to be regarded as one of the greatest of English poets, and Paradise Lost made its way rapidly to the head of English poetry. The classical critics praised this poem mainly because it was conceived on the lines of the classical epic. They compared it with Homer and Virgil, and often favourably. For example Dryden wrote in his *A Discourse Concerning the Origin and Progress of Satire* (1693):

"As for Milton, whom we all admire with so much justice, his thoughts are elevated, his words sounding, and no man has so happily copied the manner of Homer, or so copiously translated his Grecisms, and the Latin elegancies of Virgil".

In *Preface to Fables* (1700) Dryden wrote: "Milton was the poetical son of Spenser...........; for we have our lineal descents as well as other families. Spenser more than once

insinuates, that the soul of Chaucer was transfused into his body; and that was begotten by him two hundred years after his decease. Milton has acknowledged to me, that Spenser was his original".

Addison in the *Spectator* (1712) wrote in praise of Milton and Paradise Lost: Milton's characters, most of them, lie out of nature, and were to be formed purely by his own invention. It shows greater genius in Shakespeare to have drawn his Caliban, than his Hotspur or Julius Caesar: the one was to be supplied out of his own imagination, whereas the other might have been formed upon tradition, history and observation. It was much easier, therefore, foı Homer to find proper sentiments for an assembly of Grecian generals, than for Milton to diversify hi infernal council with proper characters, and inspire them with a variety of sentiments .... Adam and Eve, before the fall, are a different species from that of mankind who are descended from them; and none but a poet of the most unbounded invention, and the most exquisite judgment, could have filled their conversation and behaviour with so many circumstances during their state of innocence.

"Nor is it sufficient for an epic poem to be filled with such thoughts as are natural, unless it abounds also with such as are sublime.

"Milton's chief talent and, indeed, his distinguishing excellence lies in the sublimity of his thoughts. There are others of the moderns who rival him in every other part of poetry; but in the greatness of his sentiments he triumphs over all the poets both modern and ancient. Homer only excepted, the metaphors are very bold, but just; I must , however, observe, that the metaphors are not too thick sown in Milton, which always savours too much of wit; that they never clash with one another; which , as Aristotle observes, turns a sentence into a kind of enigma or riddle; and that he seldom has recourse to them where the proper and natural words will do as well.

"Milton, by the above mentioned helps, and by the choice of the noblest words and phrases which our tongue would afford him, has carried our languages to a greater height than any of the English poets have ever done before or after him, and made the sublimity of his style equal to that of his sentiments.

There is another objection against Milton's fable........ that the hero in *Paradise Lost* is unsuccessful and by no means a match for his enemies, . This gave occasion to Mr. Dryden's reflection, that the devil was in reality Milton's hero. I think I have obviated this objection in my first paper. The *Paradise*

Lost in an epic, or a narrative poem, and he that looks for an hero in it, searches for that which Milton never intended; but if we will needs fix the name of an hero upon any person in it, it is certainly the Messiah (Christ), who is the hero, both in the principal action, and in the chief episodes.

"I must in the next place observe, that Milton has interwoven in the texture of his fable some particulars which do not seem to have probability enough for an epic poem, particularly in the actions which he ascribes to Sin and Death, and the picture which he draws of the Limbo of Vanity, with other passages in the second book. Such allegories rather savour of the spirit of Spenser and Ariosto, than of Homer and Virgil.

"In the structure of his poem, he has likewise admitted of too many digressions, though I must confess there is so great a beauty in these very digressions, that I would not wish them out of the poem.

If we consider the language of this great poet, we must allow that it is often too much laboured, and sometimes obscured by old words, transpositions, and foreign idioms.... Milton's sentiments and ideas are so wonderfully sublime, that it would have been impossible for him to have represented them in their full strength and beauty, without having recourse

of these foreign assistances. Our language sunk under him, and was unequal to that greatness of soul which furnished him with such glorious conceptions.

I have now finished my observations on a work which does an honour to the English nation.

Dr. Johnson, referring to the sublimity and loftiness of Paradise Lost, wrote in Life of Milton (1779): "The characteristic quality of Paradise Lost is sublimity. He sometimes descends to the elegant, but his element is the great. He can occasionally invest himself with grace; but his natural part is gigantic loftiness. He can please when pleasure is required ; but it is his peculiar power to astonish.

He seems to have been well acquainted with his own genius, and to know what it was that Nature had bestowed upon him more bountifully than upon other; the power of displaying the cast, illuminating the splendid, enforcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful; he therefore chose a subject on which too much could not be said, on which he might tire his fancy without the censure of extravagance.

The appearances of nature and the occurrences of life did not satiate his appetite of greatness. To paint things as they are requires a minute attention, and employ the memory rather

than the fancy, Milton's delight was to sport in the wide region of possibility ; reality was a scene too narrow of his mind. He sent his faculties upon discovery into worlds where only imagination can travel, and delighted to form new modes of existence, and furnish sentiment and action to superior beings, to trace the counsels of hell, or accompany the choirs of heaven.

In Milton every line breathes sanctity of thought and purity of manners, except when the train of narration requires the introduction of the rebellious spirits; and even they are compelled to acknowledge their subjection to God in such a manner as excites reverence and confirms piety.

The Romantics accepted the greatness of Milton, but they liked him mainly for his style and diction. In his Lectures (1818) Coleridge observed:

The age in which the foundations of Milton's mind were laid, was congenial to it as one great era of profound erudition and individual genius- that in which the superstructure was carried up was no less favourable to it by the sternness of discipline and a show of self- control, highly flattering to the imaginative dignity of an heir of fame, and which won Milton over from the dear- loved delights of academic groves and cathedral aisles to the anti- prelatic (anti- Catholic) party. It

acted on him, too, no doubt, and modified his studies by a characteristic controversial spirit (his presentation of God is tinted with it)- a spirit no less busy indeed in political than in theological and ecclesiastical dispute, but carrying of the former almost always, more or less , in the guise of the latter. And so far as Pope's censure of our poet- that he makes God the Father a school divine- is just, we must attribute it to the character of his age.

Such was the soil, which constituted, in the strict sense of the word, the circumstances of Milton's mind. In his mind itself there were purity and piety absolute; an imagination to which neither the past nor the present were interesting except as far as they called forth and enlivened the great ideal, in which and for which he lives; as keen love of truth, which, after many weary pursuits, found as harbour in a sublime listening to the still voice in his own spirit, and as keen a love of his country, which, after a disappointment still more depressive, expanded and soared into a love of man as probationer of immortality. These were, these alone could be the conditions under which such a work as the Paradise Lost could be conceived and accomplished.

The character of Satan is pride and sensual indulgence, finding in self the sole motive of action. It is the character so

often seen in little on the political stage. It exhibits all the restlessness, temerity and cunning which have marked the mighty hunters of mankind from Nimrod of Napoleon. The common fascination of men is, that these great men, as they are called, must act from some great motive. Milton has carefully marked in his Satan the intense selfishness, the alcohol of egotism, which would rather reign in hell rather serve in heaven. To place his lust of self in opposition to denial of self or duty, and to show what exertion it would make, and what pains endure to accomplish its end, is Milton's particular object in the character of Satan. But around this character he has thrown a singularity of during, a grandeur of sufferance, and ruined splendour; which constitute the very height of poetic sublimity.

Lastly, as to execution, the language ad versification of Paradise Lost are peculiar in being so much more necessarily correspondent to each then those in any other poem or poet. The connection of the sentences and the position of the words are exquisitely artificial; but the position is rather according to the logic of passion or universal logic, than to the logic of grammar. Milton attempted to make the English language obey the logic of passion as perfectly as the Greek and Latin. Hence the occasional harshness in the construction.

Sublimity is the pre-eminent characteristic of the *Paradise Lost*. It is not an arithmetical sublime like Klopstock's, whose rule always is to treat what we might think large as contemptibly small. Klopstock mistakes bigness for greatness. There is a greatness arising from images of effort and daring, and also from those of moral endurance; in Milton both are united. The fallen angels are human passions, invested with a dramatic reality.

In the descriptions of Paradise itself you have. Milton's sunny side as a man; here his descriptive powers are exercised to the utmost, and he draws deep upon his Italian sources. In the descriptions of Eve, and throughout this part of the poem, the poet is predominant over the theologian. Dress is the symbol of the Fall, but the mark of intellect; and the metaphysics of the dress are, the hiding what is not symbolic and displaying by discrimination what is. The love of Adam and Eve in Paradise is of the highest merit- not phantomatic, and yet removed from everything degrading. It is the sentiment of one rational being towards another made tender by a specific difference in that which is essentially the same in both; it is a union of opposites, to giving and receiving mutually of the permanent in either a completion of each in the other.

Milton is not a picturesque, but a musical poet; although he has this merit that the object chosen by him by any particular foreground always remains prominent to the end, enriched, but not incumbered, by the opulence of descriptive details furnished by an exhaustless imagination. I wish the Paradise lost were more carefully read and studied than I can see any ground for believing it is, especially those parts which form the habit of always looking for a story in poetry, are scarcely read at all- as for example, Adam's vision of future events in the 11^{th} and 12^{th} books. No one can rise from the perusal of this immortal poem without a deep sense of the grandeur and purity of Milton's soul, or without feeling how susceptible of domestic enjoyment he really was, not withstanding the discomfort which actually resulted from an apparently unhappy choice in marriage. He was, as every truly great poet has ever been, a good man; but finding it impossible to realize his own aspirations, either in religion, or politics, or society, he gave up his heart to the living spirit and light within him, and avenged himself on the world by enriching it with this record of his own transcendent ideal.

Hazlitt in his *On Shakespeare and Milton* (1818) observed: Milton did not write from casual impulse, but after a sever examination of his own strength, and with a resolution to

leave nothing undone which it was in his power to do. He always labours, and almost always succeeds. He strives hard to say the finest things in the world, and he does say them. He adorns and dignifies his subject to the utmost: he surrounds it with every possible association of beauty or grandeur, whether moral, intellectual, or physical. He refines on his description of beauty; Loading sweets on sweets, till the sense aches at them; and raises his images of terror to a gigantic elevation. In Milton, there is always an appearance of effort; in Shakespeare, scarcely any.

Milton has borrowed more than any other writer, and exhausted every source of imitation, sacred or profane; yet he is perfectly distinct from every other writer. The power of his mind in stamped on every line. The fervour of his imagination melts down and renders malleable, as in a furnace, the most contradictory materials. In reading his works, we feel ourselves under the influence of the mighty intellect, that the nearer it approaches to others, becomes more distinct from them. The quantity of art in him shows the strength of his genius; the weight of intellectual obligations would have oppressed any other writer. Milton's learning has the effect of intuition.

He describes objects of which he could only have read in books, with the vividness of actual observation. His imagination his the force of nature. He makes words tell us pictures.

Force of style is one of Milton's greatest excellences. Hence perhaps, he stimulates us more in the reading, and less afterwards. The way to defend Milton against all impugners (opponents), is to take down the book and read it. Milton's blank verse is the only blank verse in the language (except Shakespeare's) that deserves the name of verse.

The Victorian critics continued to admire Milton. In his Essay on Milton, (1825) Macaualy wrote:

It is by his poetry that Milton is best known; and it is of his poetry that we wish first to speak. By the general suffrage of the civilized world, his place has been assigned among the greatest masters of the art.

The most striking characteristic of the poetry of Milton is the extreme remoteness of the associations by means of which it acts on the reader. Its effect is produced, no so much by the ideas which it directly conveys, as by other ideas which are connected with them. He electrifies the mind through conductors. The most unimaginative man must understand the *Iliad.* Homer gives him no choice, and requires from him no

exertion, but takes the whole upon himself, and sets the images in so clear a light, that is impossible to be blind to them. The words of Milton cannot be comprehended or enjoyed, unless the mind of the reader co-operates with that of the writer. He does no paint a finished picture, or play for a mere passive listener. He sketches, and leaves others to fill up the outline. He strikes a key- note, and expects his hearer to make out the melody.

We often hear of the magical influence of poetry . The expression in general means nothing; but, applied of Milton, it is most appropriate. His poetry acts like an incantation. Its merit lies less in its obvious meaning than in its occult power. There would seem, at first sight, to be no more in his words than in other words. But they are words of enchantment. No sooner are they pronounced than the past is present and the distant near. New forms of beauty start at once into existence, and all the burial- places of the memory give up their dead. Change the structure of the sentences; substitute one synonym for another, and the whole effect is destroyed . The spell loses its power; and he who should then hope to conjure with it. Would find himself as much mistaken as Cassim in the Arabian tale, when he stood crying. Open Wheat", Open Barley", to the door which obeyed no sound but open sesame.

The miserable failure of Dryden in his attempt to translate into his own diction some parts of the Paradise Lost, is a remarkable instance of this.

In support of these observations we may remark, that scarcely any passage in the poems of Milton are more generally known or frequently repeated than those which are little more than master- rolls of names. They are not always more appropriate or more melodious than other names. But they are charmed names. Every one of them is the first link in a long chain of associated ideas. Like the dwelling- place of our infancy revisited in manhood, like the song of our country heard in a strange land, they produce upon us an effect wholly independent of their intrinsic value. One transports us back to a remote period of history. Another places us among the novel scenes and manners of a distant region. A third evokes all the dear classical recollections of childhood, the school- room, the dog- eared Virgil, the holiday, and the prize. A fourth brings before us the splendid phantoms of chivalric romance, the trophied lists, the embroidered housings, the quaint devices, the haunted forests, the enchanted gardens, the achievements of enamored knights, and the smiles of rescued princesses.

Poetry which relates to the beings of another world ought to be at once mysterious and picturesque. That of Milton is so.

The spirits of Milton are unlike those of almost all other writers; his friends in particular, are wonderful creations, they are not metaphysical abstractions. They are not wicked men. They are not ugly beasts. They have no horns, no tails.... They have just enough in common with human nature to be intelligible to human beings.

Matthew Arnold, in his essay on Milton (1888), referring to his grand style, observed:

If to our English race an adequate sense of perfection of work is a real danger, if the discipline of respect for a high and flawless excellence is peculiarly needed by us, Milton is of all our gifted men the best lesson, the most salutary influence. In the sure and flawless perfection of his rhythm and diction, he is as admirable as Virgil or Dante, and in this respect he is unique amongst us. No one else in English literature and art possesses the like distinction.

That Milton, of all our English race, is by his diction and rhythm the one artist of the highest rank in the great style whom we have; this I take as requiring no discussion, this i take as certain.

The mighty power of poetry and art is generally admitted. But where the soul of this power, of this power at its best, chiefly resides, very many of us fail to see. It resides chiefly in the refining and elevation wrought in us by the high and rare excellence of the great style. We may feel the effect without being able to give ourselves clear account of its cause, but the thing is so, Now, no race needs the influence mentioned, the influence of refining and elevation, more than ours; and in poetry and art our grand source of them is Milton.

To what does he own this supreme distinction? To nature first and foremost, to that bent of nature for inequality which to the worshippers of the average man is so unacceptable; to a gift, a divine favour. The older one grows, says Goethe, the more one prizes natural gifts, because by no possibility can they be procured and stuck on. Nature formed Milton to be a great poet. But what other poet has shown so sincere a sense of the grandeur of his vocation, and a moral effort so constant and sublime to make and keep him self worthy of it? The Milton of religious and political controversy, and perhaps of domestic life also, is not seldom disfigured by want of amenity, by acerbity. The Milton of Poetry, on the other hand, is one of those great men who were modest- to quote of fine remark of Leopardi- who are modest, because

they continually compare themselves, not with other men, but with that idea of the perfect which they have before their mind. The Milton of Poetry is the man, in his own magnificent phrase, of devout prayer to the Eternal Spirit that can enrich all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases. And finally, the Milton of poetry is, in his own words again, a man of industrious and select reading. Continually he lives in companionship with high and rare excellence, with the great Rome. The Hebrew compositions were not in verse, and can be not inadequately represented by the grand, measured prose of our English Bible. The verse of the poets of Greece and Rome no translation can adequately reproduce. Prose cannot have the power of verse; verse-translation may give whatever of charm is in the soul and talent of the translator himself, but never the specific charm of the verse and poet translated. In our race are thousands of readers, presently there will be millions, who know not a word of Greek and Latin, and will never learn those languages. If this host of readers are ever to gain any sense of the power and charm of the great poets of antiquity, their way to gain it is not through translations of the ancients, but through the original

poetry of Milton, who has the like power and charm, because he has the like great style.

Through Milton they may gain it, for, in conclusion, Milton is English; this master in the great style of the ancients is English Milton has made the great style no longer an exotic here, he has made it an inmate amongst us, a leaven, and a power.

In the modern times the reputation of Milton has sunk a little. He has, to a certain extent, lost his popularity with the modern reader because he is not born and bred in the classical atmosphere, and Milton's religious doctrine is not merely foreign to him, but even repugnant. Among the modern critics T.S. Eliot is the first who has dared to treat Milton and his poetry in a rather flippant manner. In his *A Note on the Verse of John Milton* (1936) he observed:

While it must be admitted that Milton is a very great poet in deed, it is something of a puzzle to decide in what greatness consists. On analysis, the marks against him appear both more numerous and more significant than the marks to his credit. As a man, he is antipathetic. Either from the moralist's point of view, or from the theologian's point of view , or from the psychologist's point of view, or from that of the political philosopher, or judging by the ordinary standards of

likeableness in human beings, Milton is unsatisfactory. The doubts which I have to express about him are more serious than these. His greatness as a poet has been sufficiently celebrated, though I think largely for the wrong reasons, and without the proper reservations. What seems to me necessary is to assert at the same time his greatness- in what he could do well he did better than any one else has ever done it- and the serious charges to be made against him, in respect of the deterioration- the peculiar type of deterioration- to which he subjected the language..............

The most important fact about Milton, for my purposes, is his blindness. I do not mean that to go blind in middle life is itself enough to determine the whole nature of a man's poetry. Blindness must be considered in conjunction with Milton's personality and character, and the peculiar education which he received. It must also be considered in connection with his devotion, and expertness in, the art of music. Had Milton been a man of very keen senses- I mean of all the five senses, his blindness would not have mattered so much. But for a man whose consciousness, such as it was, had been withered early by book- learning, and whose gifts were naturally aural, it mattered a great deal. It would seem, in deed, to have helped him to concentrate on what he could do best.

At no period is the visual imagination conspicuous in Milton's poetry. It would be as well to give a few illustrations of what I mean by visual imagination. From *Macbeth:*

This guest of summer,
The temple- haunting martlet, does approve
By this loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here; no jutty, frieze.
Buttress, not coign of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendant bed and procreant cradle;
Where he most breed and haunt, I have observed
The air is delicate.

It may be observed that such an image, as well as another familiar quotation from a little later in the same play.

Light thickens and the crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood.

not only offer something to the eye, but, so to speak to the common sense. I mean that they convey the feeling of being in a particular place at a particular time. The comparison with Shakespeare offers another indication of the peculiarity of

Milton. With Shakespeare, fat more than with any other poet in English, the combinations of words offer perpetual novelty; they enlarge the meaning of the individual words indeed: thus procreant cradles, rooky wood. In comparison, Milton's images do not give this sense of particularity, nor are the separate words developed in significance. His language is if one may use the term without disparagement, *artificial* and *conventional.....*

"A disadvantage of the rhetorical style appears to be, that a dislocation takes place, through the hypertrophy of the auditory imagination at the expense of the visual and tactile, so that the inner meaning is separated from the surface, and tends to become something occult, or at least without effect upon the reader until fully understood. To extract everything possible from *Paradise Lost,* it would seem necessary to read it in two different ways, first solely for the sound, and second for the sense. The full beauty of his long periods can hardly be enjoyed while we are wrestling with the meaning as well; and for the pleasure of the ear the meaning is hardly necessary. Except in so far as certain key-words indicate the emotional tone of the passage. Now Shakespeare, or Dante, will bear innumerable readings, but at each reading all the elements of

appreciation can be present. There is no interruption between the surface that these poets present to you and the [illegible]. There seems to be a division, in Milton, between the philosopher or theologian and the poet. . . ."

On His Blindness

John Milton

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more bent,
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide,
Doth God exact day-labour, light denied.
I fondly ask; but patience to prevent

That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either man's work or His own gifts: who best
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state
Is kingly. Thousands at His bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.

Commentary

"On his Blindness" is one of the sonnets written by John Milton. He was born in London, in and fairly religious family. From his teenage years he devoted himself to poetry and when he was twenty-one, he wrote his first masterpiece: the Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity. In his poetry he welds together two powerful worlds: that of European Renaissance and that of the Christian Reformation which was central to his beliefs and his upbringing. He wrote great epics like Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained. Towards the end of his life Milton became blind. He expressed his resignation in this sonnet. Here, he uses the sonnet to resolve an ideological or religious question.

Being a sonnet the argument of this poem falls in two sections, the octet and the sestet. This division embodies the development of the idea or the emotion in the sonnet. The octet contains the "question" and the sestet contains the "answer". The octet deals with Milton's sorrow and anger at the loss of sight. It consists of on long sentence beginning with the relative clause "When I consider..."till it arrives at the climatic arrogant question:

Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?

The fact that the eight lines are one sentence gives grammatical unity to the octet, supporting its unity of idea and emotion and justifying its unity of rhyme.

In the last six lines Milton uses short decisive sentences to proclaim the greatness and wisdom of God and advocate blind acceptance to His will. These short sentences contrast with the long tortured questing of the octet and mirror the attempt of a proud spirit to find peace in resignation. Moreover, Milton himself is the central character and is much aware of his own importance. This is reflected in the use of pronouns relating to self; 'I', 'me', 'my'. In the sestet the poem changes its focus: God becomes the central figure. There are six pronouns relating to god; 'God', 'Him', 'His'.

As for the technical devices used by the poet, "On his Blindness" is an Italian sonnet in form. He divides the fourteen lines into the octet containing eight lines and the

sestet containing six lines. It has also a regular rhyme. The rhyme scheme is a, b, b, a, a, b, b, a, c, d, e, c, d, e.

When I consider how my light is spent, ...a
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,...b
And that one talent which is death to hide,......b
Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more bent, ...a
To serve therewith my Maker, and present ....a
My true account, lest he returning chide, ...b
Doth God exact day-labour, light denied. ......b
I fondly ask; but patience to prevent ....a

This regular rhyme adds to the musicality of the poem. Moreover, what adds to the musicality of the poem is its regular rhythm. The poem is written in the iambic pentameter. This is a ten-syllable line with five stresses or emphases.

When I consider how my light is spent
It is unstressed syllable followed by stressed one.

Milton does not make particular use of figures of speech in this sonnet. There is the initial metaphor equating 'sight' with 'light' and continuing the equation in 'dark'

world. But apart from that, the language is straightforward.

The language in the sestet is highly Biblical in its use of phrases like 'His gifts', 'His mild yoke' and 'His state is kingly'.

Appendix

Sonnet. A fourteen-line poem. There are two basic types: the Italian or Petrarchan has an octave (eight lines) and a sestet (six lines) and rhymes abba abba cde cde. The English or Shakespearean sonnet is made up of three quatrains and a couplet and rhymes ab ba cd dc effe gg. The meter is iambic pentameter. A sonnet sequence is a series of sonnets on the same theme by the same poet: there are three major sequences in English, by Shakespeare, Spenser and Sidney. All are about love. The sonnet form, however, has been used by many poets to treat all manner of themes.

The Sonnet

A Sonnet is a poem consisting of fourteen iambic pentameters. There are three forms of sonnet:

1. The Petrarchan
2. The Miltonic
3. The Shakespearian

The Petrarchan Form

The *Petrarchan* form of sonnet is made up of two parts or "systems" as they are called: a major system, termed the *octave*, consisting of the first eight lines; a minor system, termed the *sestet*, consisting of the last six.

The rime scheme of the octave is, *abbaabba*, and is invariable. The rime scheme of the sestet varies, but it may consist of any arrangement of two or three rimes, so long as the last two lines do not form a couplet. The usual arrangement in the sestet is either *cdcdcd*, or *cdecde*.

The Shakespearian (English) Form:

The Shakespearian form of a sonnet is made up of three quatrains (a stanza of four lines) and a couplet. It also has a regular rhyme and meter. The meter is iambic pentameter. It is a ten-syllable line with five stresses or emphases. It begins with unstressed syllable followed by stressed one.

Shall I comp are thee to a summer's day ?

The Miltonic Form:

In the Petrarchan form of sonnet it will be seen that there is a definite pause, usually represented by a full stop, at the end of the octave. Milton, who in the main adopted the Petrarchan form, sometimes lets the octave run on into the sestet; otherwise the two forms are identical.

Example:

ON HIS BLINDNESS

a When I consider how my light is spent,

b Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,

b And that one talent which is death to hide,

a Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more bent,

a To serve therewith my Maker, and present

b My true account, lest he returning chide,

b Doth God exact day-labour, light denied.

a I fondly ask; but patience to prevent

c **That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need**

d Either man's work or His own gifts: who best

e Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state

c Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed

d And post o'er land and ocean without rest:-

e They also serve who only stand and wait.

The Shakespearian Sonnet

The Shakespearian form of sonnet differs entirely from the Petrarchan form. It consists of three heroic quatrains and a final riming couplet.

(Rime scheme, *ababcdcdefefgg)*

THE GOOD-MORROW.
by John Donne

I WONDER by my troth, what thou and I
Did, till we loved ? were we not wean'd till then ?
But suck'd on country pleasures, childishly ?
Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den ?
'Twas so ; but this, all pleasures fancies be ;
If ever any beauty I did see,
Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.

And now good-morrow to our waking souls,
Which watch not one another out of fear ;
For love all love of other sights controls,
And makes one little room an everywhere.
Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone ;
Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have shown ;
Let us possess one world ; each hath one, and is one.

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,
And true plain hearts do in the faces rest ;
Where can we find two better hemispheres
Without sharp north, without declining west ?
Whatever dies, was not mix'd equally ;
If our two loves be one, or thou and I
Love so alike that none can slacken, none can die.

THE CANONIZATION.

by John Donne

FOR God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love ;
Or chide my palsy, or my gout ;
My five gray hairs, or ruin'd fortune flout ;
With wealth your state, your mind with arts improve ;
Take you a course, get you a place,
Observe his Honour, or his Grace ;
Or the king's real, or his stamp'd face
Contemplate ; what you will, approve,
So you will let me love.

Alas ! alas ! who's injured by my love?
What merchant's ships have my sighs drown'd?
Who says my tears have overflow'd his ground?
When did my colds a forward spring remove?
When did the heats which my veins fill
Add one more to the plaguy bill?
Soldiers find wars, and lawyers find out still
Litigious men, which quarrels move,
Though she and I do love.

Call's what you will, we are made such by love ;
Call her one, me another fly,
We're tapers too, and at our own cost die,
And we in us find th' eagle and the dove.
The phoenix riddle hath more wit
By us ; we two being one, are it ;
So, to one neutral thing both sexes fit.
We die and rise the same, and prove
Mysterious by this love.

We can die by it, if not live by love,
And if unfit for tomb or hearse

Our legend be, it will be fit for verse ;
And if no piece of chronicle we prove,
We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms ;
As well a well-wrought urn becomes
The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs,
And by these hymns, all shall approve
Us canonized for love ;

And thus invoke us, "You, whom reverend love
Made one another's hermitage ;
You, to whom love was peace, that now is rage ;
Who did the whole world's soul contract, and drove
Into the glasses of your eyes ;
So made such mirrors, and such spies,
That they did all to you epitomize—
Countries, towns, courts beg from above
A pattern of your love."

Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542)

And Wilt thou Leave me Thus?

And wilt thou leave me thus?
Say nay, say nay, for shame,
To save thee from the blame
Of all my grief and grame;
And wilt thou leave me thus?
Say nay, say nay!

And wilt thou leave me thus,
That hath loved thee so long
In wealth and woe among?

And is thy heart so strong
As for to leave me thus?
Say nay, say nay!

And wilt thou leave me thus,
That hath given thee my heart
Never for to depart,
Nother for pain nor smart;
And wilt thou leave me thus?
Say nay, say nay!

And wilt thou leave me thus
And have no more pity
Of him that loveth thee?
Hélas, thy cruelty!
And wilt thou leave me thus?
Say nay, say nay!

Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542)

Farewell Love and all thy Laws for ever

Farewell love and all thy laws forever;
Thy baited hooks shall tangle me no more.
Senec and Plato call me from thy lore
To perfect wealth, my wit for to endeavour.
In blind error when I did persever,
Thy sharp repulse, that pricketh aye so sore,
Hath taught me to set in trifles no store
And scape forth, since liberty is lever.
Therefore farewell; go trouble younger hearts
And in me claim no more authority.
With idle youth go use thy property
And thereon spend thy many brittle darts,

For hitherto though I have lost all my time,
Me lusteth no lenger rotten boughs to climb.

Michael Drayton
(1563 - 1631)

Sonnet II: My Heart Was Slain

My heart was slain, and none but you and I;
Who should I think the murther should commit,
Since but yourself there was no creature by,
But only I, guiltless of murth'ring it?
It slew itself; the verdict on the view
Doth quit the dead, and me not accessary.
Well, well, I fear it will be prov'd by you,
The evidence so great a proof doth carry.
But O, see, see, we need inquire no further:
Upon your lips the scarlet drops are found,
And in your eye the boy that did the murther;
Your cheeks yet pale, since first he gave the wound.
By this I see, however things be past,
Yet Heaven will still have murther out at last.

Idea XX: An evil spirit, your beauty, haunts me still

An evil spirit, your beauty, haunts me still,
Wherewith, alas, I have been long possess'd,
Which ceaseth not to tempt me to each ill,
Nor gives me once but one poor minute's rest.
In me it speaks, whether I sleep or wake;
And when by means to drive it out I try,
With greater torments then it me doth take,

And tortures me in most extremity.
Before my face it lays down my despairs,
And hastes me on unto a sudden death;
Now tempting me to drown myself in tears,
And then in sighing to give up my breath.
Thus am I still provok'd to every evil
By this good-wicked spirit, sweet angel-devil.

Michael Drayton

LONDON: A POEM
In IMITATION of the THIRD SATIRE of JUVENAL
By Samuel Johnson

Tho' Grief and Fondness in my Breast rebel,
When injur'd Thales bids the Town farewell,
Yet still my calmer Thoughts his Choice commend,
I praise the Hermit, but regret the Friend,
Resolved at length, from Vice and London far,
To breathe in distant Fields a purer Air,
And, fix'd on Cambria's solitary shore,
Give to St. David one true Briton more.

For who would leave, unbrib'd, Hibernia's Land,
Or change the Rocks of Scotland for the Strand?
There none are swept by sudden Fate away,
But all whom Hunger spares, with Age decay:
Here Malice, Rapine, Accident, conspire,
And now a Rabble Rages, now a Fire;
Their Ambush here relentless Ruffians lay,
And here the fell Attorney prowls for Prey;
Here falling Houses thunder on your Head,

And here a female Atheist talks you dead.

While Thales waits the Wherry that contains
Of dissipated Wealth the small Remains,
On Thames's Banks, in silent Thought we stood,
Where Greenwich smiles upon the silver Flood:
Struck with the Seat that gave Eliza Birth,
We kneel, and kiss the consecrated Earth;
In pleasing Dreams the blissful Age renew,
And call Britannia's Glories back to view;
Behold her Cross triumphant on the Main,
The Guard of Commerce, and the Dread of Spain,
Ere Masquerades debauch'd, Excise oppress'd,
Or English Honour grew a standing Jest.

A transient Calm the happy Scenes bestow,
And for a Moment lull the Sense of Woe.
At length awaking, with contemptuous Frown,
Indignant Thales eyes the neighb'ring Town.

Since Worth, he cries, in these degen'rate Days,
Wants ev'n the cheap Reward of empty Praise;
In those curst Walls, devote to Vice and Gain,
Since unrewarded Science toils in vain;
Since Hope but sooths to double my Distress,
And ev'ry Moment leaves my Little less;
While yet my steady Steps no Staff sustains,
And Life still vig'rous revels in my Veins;
Grant me, kind Heaven, to find some happier Place,
Where Honesty and Sense are no Disgrace;
Some pleasing Bank where verdant Osiers play,
Some peaceful Vale with Nature's Paintings gay;
Where once the harass'd Briton found Repose,
And safe in Poverty defy'd his Foes;

Some secret Cell, ye Pow'rs, indulgent give.
Let —— live here, for —— has learn'd to live.
Here let those reign, whom Pensions can incite
To vote a Patriot black, a Courtier white;
Explain their Country's dear-bought Rights away,
And plead for Pirates in the Face of Day;
With slavish Tenets taint our poison'd Youth,
And lend a Lye the confidence of Truth.

Let such raise Palaces, and Manors buy,
Collect a Tax, or farm a Lottery,
With warbling Eunuchs fill a licens'd Stage,
And lull to Servitude a thoughtless Age.

Heroes, proceed! What Bounds your Pride shall hold?
What Check restrain your Thirst of Pow'r and Gold?
Behold rebellious Virtue quite o'erthrown,
Behold our Fame, our Wealth, our Lives your own.

To such, a groaning Nation's Spoils are giv'n,
When publick Crimes inflame the Wrath of Heav'n:
But what, my Friend, what Hope remains for me,
Who start at Theft, and blush at Perjury?
Who scarce forbear, tho' Britain's Court he sing,
To pluck a titled Poet's borrow'd Wing;
A Statesman's Logic, unconvinc'd can hear,
And dare to slumber o'er the Gazetteer;
Despise a Fool in half his Pension drest,
And strive in vain to laugh at H—y's jest.

Others with softer Smiles, and subtler Art,
Can sap the Principles, or taint the Heart;
With more Address a Lover's Note convey,
Or bribe a Virgin's Innocence away.

Well may they rise, while I, whose Rustic Tongue
Ne'er knew to puzzle Right, or varnish Wrong,
Spurn'd as a Beggar, dreaded as a Spy,
Live unregarded, unlamented die.

For what but social Guilt the Friend endears?
Who shares Orgilio's Crimes, his Fortune shares.
But thou, should tempting Villainy present
All Marlb'rough hoarded, or all Villiers spent;
Turn from the glitt'ring Bribe thy scornful Eye,
Nor sell for Gold, what Gold could never buy,
The peaceful Slumber, self-approving Day,
Unsullied Fame, and Conscience ever gay.

The cheated Nation's happy Fav'rites, see!
Mark whom the Great caress, who frown on me!
London! the needy Villain's gen'ral Home,
The Common Shore of Paris and of Rome;
With eager Thirst, by Folly or by Fate,
Sucks in the Dregs of each corrupted State.
Forgive my Transports on a Theme like this,
I cannot bear a French metropolis.

Illustrious Edward! from the Realms of Day,
The Land of Heroes and of Saints survey;
Nor hope the British Lineaments to trace,
The rustic Grandeur, or the surly Grace;
But lost in thoughtless Ease, and empty Show,
Behold the Warriour dwindled to a Beau;
Sense, Freedom, Piety, refin'd away,
Of France the Mimic, and of Spain the Prey.

All that at home no more can beg or steal,
Or like a Gibbet better than a Wheel;

Hiss'd from the Stage, or hooted from the Court,
Their Air, their Dress, their Politicks import;
Obsequious, artful, voluble and gay,
On Britain's fond Credulity they prey.
No gainful Trade their Industry can 'scape,
They sing, they dance, clean Shoes, or cure a Clap;
All Sciences a fasting Monsieur knows,
And bid him go to Hell, to Hell he goes.

Ah! what avails it, that, from Slav'ry far,
I drew the Breath of Life in English Air;
Was early taught a Briton's Right to prize,
And lisp the Tale of Henry's Victories;
If the gull'd Conqueror receives the Chain,
And what their Armies lost, their Cringes gain?

Studious to please, and ready to submit,
The supple Gaul was born a Parasite:
Still to his Int'rest true, where'er he goes,
Wit, Brav'ry, Worth, his lavish Tongue bestows;
In ev'ry Face a Thousand Graces shine,
From ev'ry Tongue flows Harmony divine.
These Arts in vain our rugged Natives try,
Strain out with fault'ring Diffidence a Lye,
And get a Kick for awkward Flattery.

Besides, with Justice, this discerning Age
Admires their wond'rous Taients for the Stage:
Well may they venture on the Mimic's art,
Who play from Morn to Night a borrow'd Part;
Practis'd their Master's Notions to embrace,
Repeat his Maxims, and reflect his Face;
With ev'ry wild Absurdity comply,
And view each Object with another's Eye;

To shake with Laughter ere the Jest they hear,
To pour at Will the counterfeited Tear;
And as their Patron hints the Cold or Heat,
To shake in Dog-days, in December sweat.

How, when Competitors like these contend,
Can surly Virtue hope to fix a Friend?
Slaves that with serious Impudence beguile,
And lye without a Blush, without a Smile;
Exalt each Trifle, ev'ry Vice adore,
Your Taste in Snuff, your Judgment in a Whore;
Can Balbo's Eloquence applaud, and swear
He gropes his Breeches with a Monarch's Air.

For Arts like these preferr'd, admir'd, carest,
They first invade your Table, then your Breast;
Explore your Secrets with insidious Art,
Watch the weak Hour, and ransack all the Heart;
Then soon your ill-plac'd Confidence repay,
Commence your Lords, and govern or betray.
By Numbers here from Shame or Censure free,
All Crimes are safe, but hated Poverty.
This, only this, the rigid Law persues,
This, only this, provokes the snarling Muse;
The sober Trader at a tatter'd Cloak,
Wakes from his Dream, and labours for a Joke;
With brisker Air the silken Courtiers gaze,
And turn the varied Taunt a thousand Ways.
Of all the Griefs that harrass the Distrest,
Sure the most bitter is a scornful Jest;
Fate never wounds more deep the gen'rous Heart,
Than when a Blockhead's Insult points the Dart.

Has Heaven reserv'd, in Pity to the Poor,

No pathless Waste, or undiscover'd Shore?
No secret Island in the boundless Main?
No peaceful Desart yet unclaim'd by SPAIN?
Quick let us rise, the happy Seats explore,
And bear Oppression's Insolence no more.
This mournful Truth is ev'ry where confest,
Slow rises worth, by poverty deprest:
But here more slow, where all are Slaves to Gold,
Where Looks are Merchandise, and Smiles are sold,
Where won by Bribes, by Flatteries implor'd,
The Groom retails the Favours of his Lord.

But hark! th' affrighted Crowd's tumultuous Cries
Roll thro' the Streets, and thunder to the Skies;
Rais'd from some pleasing Dream of Wealth and Pow'r,
Some pompous Palace, or some blissful Bow'r,
Aghast you start, and scarce with aking Sight,
Sustain th' approaching Fire's tremendous Light;
Swift from pursuing Horrors take your Way,
And Leave your little All to Flames a Prey;
Then thro' the World a wretched Vagrant roam,
For where can starving Merit find a Home?
In vain your mournful Narrative disclose,
While all neglect, and most insult your Woes.

Should Heaven's just Bolts Orgilio's Wealth confound,
And spread his flaming Palace on the Ground,
Swift o'er the Land the dismal Rumour flies,
And publick Mournings pacify the Skies;
The Laureat Tribe in servile Verse relate,
How Virtue wars with persecuting Fate;
With well-feign'd Gratitude the pension's Band
Refund the Plunder of the begger'd Land.
See! while he builds, the gaudy Vassals come,

And crowd with sudden Wealth the rising Dome;
The Price of Boroughs and of Souls restore,
And raise his Treasures higher than before.
Now bless'd with all the Baubles of the Great,
The polish'd Marble, and the shining Plate,
Orgilio sees the golden Pile aspire,
And hopes from angry Heav'n another Fire.

Couid'st thou resign the Park and Play content,
For the fair Banks of Severn or of Trent;
There might'st thou find some elegant Retreat,
Some hireling Senator's deserted Seat;
And stretch thy Prospects o'er the smiling Land,
For less than rent the Dungeons of the Strand;
There prune thy Walks, support thy drooping Flow'rs,
Direct thy Rivulets, and twine thy Bow'rs;
And, while thy Beds a cheap Repast afford,
Despise the Dainties of a venal Lord:
There ev'ry Bush with Nature's Music rings,
There ev'ry Breeze bears Health upon its Wings;
On all thy Hours Security shall smile,
And bless thine Evening Walk and Morning Toil.

Prepare for Death, if here at Night you roam,
And sign your Will before you sup from Home.
Some fiery Fop, with new Commission vain,
Who sleeps on Brambles till he kills his Man;
Some frolick Drunkard, reeling from a Feast,
Provokes a Broil, and stabs you for a Jest.
Yet ev'n these Heroes, mischievously gay,
Lords of the Street, and Terrors of the Way;
Flush'd as they are with Folly, Youth and Wine,
Their prudent Insults to the Poor confine;
Afar they mark the Flambeau's bright Approach,

And shun the shining Train, and golden Coach.

In vain, these Dangers past, your Doors you close,
And hope the balmy Blessings of Repose:
Cruel with Guilt, and daring with Despair,
The midnight Murd'rer bursts the faithless Bar;
Invades the sacred Hour of silent Rest,
And plants, unseen, a Dagger in your Breast.

Scarce can our Fields, such Crowds at Tyburn die,
With Hemp the Gallows and the Fleet supply.
Propose your Schemes, ye Senatorian Band,
Whose Ways and Means support the sinking Land;
Lest Ropes be wanting in the tempting Spring,
To rig another Convoy for the K—g.

A single Jail, in Alfred's golden Reign,
Could half the Nation's Criminals contain;
Fair Justice then, without Constraint ador'd,
Sustain'd the Ballance, but resign'd the Sword;
No Spies were paid, no Special Juries known,
Blest Age! But ah! how diff'rent from our own!

Much could I add, —— but see the Boat at hand,
The Tide retiring, calls me from the Land:
Farewel! —— When Youth, and Health, and Fortune spent,
Thou fly'st for Refuge to the Wilds of Kent;
And tir'd like me with Follies and with Crimes,
In angry Numbers warn'st succeeding Times;
Then shall thy Friend, nor thou refuse his Aid,
Still Foe to Vice forsake his Cambrian Shade;
In Virtue's Cause once more exert his Rage,
Thy Satire point, and animate thy Page.

Study Questions

I. "The sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines that has three different forms."

Discuss

II. Write short notes on the following

1. Apostrophe 2. Octave 3. Sestet
4. Visual imagery 5. metaphor 6. simile
7. iambic pentameter 8. lyric poetry 9. elegy
10. assonance 11. consonance 12. alliteration

III. Comment on the following poems

1. "To Daffodils"
2. "Cherry Ripe"
3. "To the Moon"
4. "To Blossoms"

-What kind of imagery is used in "To Daffodils"?

- How is the apostrophe used in "To the Moon?"

- What is the main theme of "To Blossoms"?